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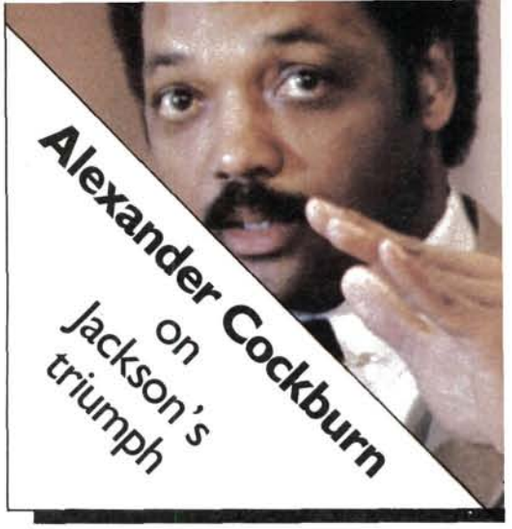
Exclusive: Labour's 'tough bastard' image



Alexander Cockburn on Jackson's triumph

TONY BENN'S CHALLENGE

CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Cover illustration: Fiona MacVicar

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20 March SUNDAY TV
BBC 1
8.28 Blackadder the Third
Awarded Best Comedy Series.
Produced by John Lloyd.
8.50 The Really Wild Show
Awarded Best Children's Programme (Documentary/Educational).
Produced by Mike Beynon.
9.14 Fortunes of War
Emma Thompson
Awarded Best Television Actress for her performances in Fortunes of War and Tutti Frutti.
This programme also won Best Costume Design and Best Design at the BAFTA Craft Awards.
9.42 Esther Rantzen
Received the Richard Dimbleby Award for her outstanding contribution to factual programmes.
10.21 Julia Smith
Received the Desmond Davis Award for her outstanding contributions to British Television — including EastEnders.
BBC 2
7.54 Victoria Wood on TV
Awarded Best Light Entertainment Programme.
Produced and Directed by Geoff Posner.
7.57 Tutti Frutti
Awarded Best Drama Series.
Produced by Andy Park and Directed by Tony Smith.
This programme also won Best Make-up, Best Graphics, Best Sound Supervisor and Best VTR Editor at the BAFTA Craft Awards.
8.01 Horizon Special: Lifestory
Awarded Best Single Drama.
Produced by Mick Jackson.
8.05 The Duty Men
Awarded Best Factual Series.
Produced by Paul Hamann.
This programme also won Best Film Sound and Best Film Editor at the BAFTA Craft Awards.
8.47 A Simple Man (L.S.Lowry)
The Huw Wheldon Award for the Best Arts Programme.
Produced by Ian Squires.
Choreographed by Gillian Lynne.
9.23 Yes, Prime Minister
Nigel Hawthorne
Awarded Best Light Entertainment Performance.
The writers of Yes, Prime Minister, Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn, also received The Writer's Award.

IT MADE FOR A GREAT NIGHT'S VIEWING.

At last Sunday's BAFTA ceremony we were delighted to pick up 12 of the 18 television awards. And the previous Sunday, we were equally delighted to win 8 of the 11 craft awards.

BBC

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NEW STATESMAN

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NEXT WEEK

"Incomprehensible hip talk": the typecasting of black actors; *Hollywood Shuffle* reviewed. *Plus* false Start: what's behind the 50 per cent arms cuts?

A death penalty?

NEIL KINNOCK and Roy Hattersley have turned with zest — you might even say glee — from the baffling battle with Mrs Thatcher to try and destroy once and for all the old left fundamentalism which Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, their declared rivals, are pitting against their efforts to re-style the Labour Party in electoral garb they consider more appropriate for the late 1980s.

This gleeful attitude is at first sight curious. For as they have argued, the contest for the leadership and deputy leadership is a largely irrelevant distraction from the party's prime duty to remove Mrs Thatcher from office. It is, however, a contest that they *understand*; they know exactly how to roll Benn and Heffer over. But they haven't a clue how to combat Mrs Thatcher. Here she is, pushing through deeply unpopular policies, wreaking havoc with the economic, industrial and social fabric of the nation, turning all received wisdoms of consensus politics upside down, and yet for all the pounding that they manfully seek to give her, they can make no evident impression on her, morally or electorally.

Who wouldn't rather give old Tony and Eric a good bashing — especially as it probably carries the additional bonus of making their positions quite safe against their real rivals this side of the next election?

In a healthier political culture, of course, such a contest need not be irrelevant and, as Benn endearingly argues, could even be educative. But Neil Kinnock's way of managing his party — concerned as he is to minimise all differences for fear of the party being seen as divided — paradoxically draws lines of division which exclude the arguments which ought to be taking place and polarises debate between the defensive revisionism of a centre-right coalition and an almost nostalgic fundamentalism of class, struggle and solidarity.

But perhaps the contest can be turned to good use? Some advisers in the media have suggested that Kinnock and Hattersley take their case for "modernising" the party positively to the public. For his part, Tony Benn — as several readers have pointed out — has been one of the few Labour parliamentarians who has not been inhibited about criticising the shameful weaknesses of parliamentary democracy as known at Westminster. Democracy is to be one of the themes of his leadership campaign. Such a theme offers a unifying thrust to a counter-offensive to Thatcherism which has real popular resonance and far more radical potential than the Hattersley-Kinnock adoption of "freedom". For the language of democracy provides a powerful critique of Mrs Thatcher's unscrupulous abuse of big government, and the secrecy and manipulation involved, as well as of the new freedoms granted to the unaccountable institutions of big business. And the idea of the citizen offers the opportunites of radicalising British democracy, empowering ordinary people, and reconciling individualism with social concern.

But will Benn follow that theme through to its logical end: electoral reform? Labour's silence on the unrepresentative nature of Mrs Thatcher's majority in the House of Commons only serves to legitimate the series of regressive measures her government is pushing through parliament and shores up her callous indifference to the public's desire to protect and fund the NHS. The principled case for electoral reform is increasingly in Labour's own political interests.

Yet it won't be an issue in this contest because the labourist conservatism of Benn and Heffer, on this as on many other key issues, matches that of Kinnock and Hattersley. Why, the very idea of electoral reform, Hattersley proclaims, is politically too dangerous for Labour even to discuss.

Both Benn and Heffer are also more internationalist in perspective than most of their party. A curious aspect of Labour's rethinking has been its insular nature. There are plenty of models for socialist renewal on show all over the world. Sweden is surely still a country from which Labour's social democrats can learn? France's Socialist Party has shown how to build up electoral strength from a position of huge weakness. Australia and New Zealand provide role models for the braver market-oriented managerial spirits to Kinnock's right.

Nearer home, the SPD in West Germany has been forced to realign itself with green concerns and feminist ideas for the future, while in Italy new ideas for social ownership and modest experiments in transformative politics at local level pass unnoticed. Perhaps Benn's interest in the misnamed new social "movements" might run to picking up what they really have to offer: ideas for a decentralised, bottom-up political renewal.

But for the moment one thing is sure. Roy Hattersley's opening argument that the contest would set the shape for the Labour Party's future into the next millennium is desperately far from a convincing rallying cry for progressive politics in Britain. It's bluff, of course. But it sounds chillingly more like a death penalty for the Labour Party. □

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DIARY

To begin with, a small test. Here is how four newspapers opened their reports of Labour's leadership election last week. Guess which is which:

1) "The Labour Party was plunged into six months of internal warfare last night as Mr Tony Benn announced he was challenging Mr Neil Kinnock for the leadership."

2) "The Labour Party was plunged into six months of civil war last night when left-wing MP Tony Benn . . ."

3) "The Labour Party was last night thrown into six months of internal struggle when the left-wing Campaign Group announced that it was putting up Mr Tony Benn. . ."

4) "The Labour Party was on course last night for six months of bitter infighting after Mr Anthony Wedgwood Benn . . ."

The correct order is *The Times, Sun, Guardian* and *Daily Telegraph*. (The latter, incidentally, cannot expect to be treated as a serious newspaper as long as it deliberately gets Benn's name wrong in its news pages.) Neil Kinnock, who seems to have such a terror of seething pluralism, must have been mightily impressed.

○

Where, I sometimes wonder, is the Kinnock we used to know, the man of charm and zest and impish humour? At Labour conferences in the 70s some people would turn up at the Tribune rally just to hear his gloriously funny pep talk while the collection was being taken. Now it seems years since a joke passed his lips. With his severe haircut and M&S suit he looks like an irritable young bank manager. Sounds like one, too. His reaction last week to the challenge from Benn and Heffer was typically bad-tempered: he dismissed elections (and by implication democracy) as "daft and absurd". I'm no disciple of Tony Benn but I can't see why he shouldn't be allowed to stand if he wants to. The logic of Kinnock's argument is that he should be allowed to keep his job, unchallenged, for life. As I have already remarked here, one can only boggle at the fact that Kinnock is trying to stop multi-candidate elections in the Labour Party at the same time as Gorbachev is introducing them for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

○

A friend of mine, a woman in her 40s, moved to Islington in North London two years ago. Since then she has been burgled twice. Her car, an old Mini, has been broken into twice, slashed once and shot (yes shot) once. These crimes are so common — and so hard to solve — that one doesn't expect the police to investigate them. But when she was brutally beaten up in broad daylight last Tuesday afternoon, and was able to offer a good description of her attacker and advice on how to find him, she assumed that some official effort would be made. She was wrong.

She had been waiting at a bus-stop. When the bus arrived a group of youths aged about 15 stormed through the queue in a flying wedge, shoving my friend and others aside. She touched one of the boys on the shoulder to point out that she had been waiting for 20 minutes. As she puts it, "he went berserk". He punched her with great force on the jaw and hit the side of the head, knocking her to the ground. (Her face was still badly bruised when I saw her four days later.) By the time the police arrived, half an hour after being telephoned, the culprit and his friends were long gone.

She believed that the youths had been on their way home from school. So she suggested that she and a police officer visit the bus stop at the same time the next day to see if she could spot them. The police were uninterested: they told her that they had London-wide instructions not to follow up attacks of this sort without *definite* evidence that would enable them to find the attacker. As her idea was no more than a hunch — albeit a strong and reasonable one — they wouldn't bother. Case closed.

○

News International's pre-tax profit last year was £111.5 million. This was not enough. Belts must be tightened further, according to an internal memo from the general manager of the Murdoch redoubt at Wapping, John Cowley, to the building manager and catering manager.

"To take effect immediately," Cowley orders, in tones of urgency, "the only people eligible for free biscuits, Perrier water, etc, are either the Editors, the four Managing Editors or Directors of the company. All others should cease immediately."

○

Last week I visited a woman of my acquaintance in a small Cotswolds hamlet. After a couple of glasses of wine, she surprised me by suddenly sprinkling a few drops of rosewater from a small blue bottle on to my hands. Next she gave me a home-made Persian sweet to eat. Then she held a mirror in front of my face. The idea, she explained, was that I would be beaming with pleasure at the smell of the rosewater and the taste of the sweet. What I saw in the reflection was to be my face for the next year: for my host was a Zoroastrian and she was celebrating the Zoroastrian New Year.

Though I'm normally resistant to mumbo jumbo this seemed harmless enough; quite charming, in fact. But what most excited me was the sheer good sense of having New Year after the spring equinox. I never truly enjoy New Year's Eve, however much whisky and knees-up-mother-Brown it includes. What is there to celebrate, knowing that the worst of winter is yet to come? The advent of spring, however, actually *feels* like a new birth.

As I revealed two weeks ago, we may soon have British Summer Time in the winter. Changing the calendar will be a greater challenge than tinkering with the clock, but all campaigns have to start somewhere.

○

The other campaign which occupies my time at the moment is a libel case which I intend to bring against Duke Hussey, chairman of the BBC. I disapprove of suing for libel. This particular action, however, is not a quest for Jeffrey Archer-sized damages but a public service: I want to force the brazen Hussey to behave himself. Recently he has taken to abasing himself before any Tories who make the slightest growl about the BBC. His recent speech to the Institute of Directors was perhaps the nadir: what other company chairman would stand up at such a gathering and denounce their own staff as a bunch of irresponsible incompetents? Since he named no names, the BBC journalists have no remedy. But he has named me, describing an article I wrote in the *Radio Times* as "misleading" and "entirely inappropriate", so I am seizing the opportunity. For a brief period after his arrival at Portland Place it looked as if Hussey might show some of the gallantry which lost him a leg in World War II. But he has now decided, apparently, that appeasement makes for an easier life.

○

What a cautious fellow Lord Young is.

On *Any Questions* last weekend he was invited to offer his opinion of Edwina Currie's suggestion that old people should remortgage their houses to pay for private medical treatment. He declined the invitation. His excuse? "I wasn't there [when she made the remark]. I only heard about it at second hand."

On the same programme he was asked what he thought about censorship of journalists in South Africa. Again he avoided the question: "I don't know what's going on in South Africa because I haven't been there."

As far as I know Lord Young has never been in a dole queue either. Can we expect his rigorous self-denying ordinance to apply to pronouncements on that subject, too?

Francis Wheen

ROGER WODDIS

All smiles

Nicholas Scott, Minister for Social Security, has extolled charity as "a glorious tradition"

Now praise we true compassion,
As shown by Mr Scott,
For those who live on nothing,
And those who cop the lot.

A glorious tradition
Enshrines the Easter egg:
How sweet it is to suffer!
How beautiful to beg!

Though humbug from the heartless
May earn a stern rebuke,
The poor will count their blessings,
And few forbear to puke.

And while the weak are reaping
And walking weary miles,
The Minister of Bullshit
Will be all Samuel Smiles.

Let all who doubt be frowned on,
And all who shout be shunned;
Saint Nicholas is risen
To praise the Social Fund.

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Liberals and greens fail to find common ground

THE PLANNED launch of a liberal green current in British politics was a disappointment. A press release, dated 24 March, announced that this was a "major conference bringing together members of both the Green Party and the Liberal Party". It also announced that 300 people were expected. The references to the Liberal Party as well as to numbers spoke of rather more wishful thinking than hard planning.

About 80 people sat in the students' union at Leeds University last weekend to listen to panels of speakers including Simon Hughes, SLDP MP, Meg Beresford, SLDP General Secretary of CND and Michael Meadowcroft, who has now lost both his seat and his party. Although organisers expect history to record this as the second meeting organised by Green Voice, a grouping of Greens and Liberals, they also hoped this would go down in history as the start of something big.

The purpose of the discussion was to establish the new political values on which the movement must be based. The star speaker was Freda Meissner-Blau, elected in 1986 as one of Austria's seven Green MPs. She had survived Britain's terrible "plastic food on plastic plates for plastic people" to offer a sharp critique of conventional ecology. "We do not think of ourselves as tree trade unionists," she said. "We are just as involved in social questions. It is absurd to think the environment can be reduced to ecology." For politics itself, she looked to the classical Greek meaning of "the organisation of life in a society". Today, that meant assuring human existence in the world, which neither the market-right nor the centrally-planning left could do.

Thanks to an electoral system which can produce Green MPs as well as Kurt Waldheim, she was able to speak from a platform of success. The prevailing tone of many speakers was of religious exiles mourning the corruption of a world that was hell-bent on destruction. In such an elegy of lost hopes and dead trees the values seemed more spiritual than political. The first speaker was Martin Palmer, the religious adviser to the World Wildlife Fund and Director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture. The new political values, he suggested, were to be found in the world's religious texts, all of which spoke of the need to respect nature. His commanding anecdote was of Britain's finest hour: Edmund Hilary who announced he had "conquered" a mountain and triumphantly stuck a flag in it; Sherpa Tensing who fell to his knees and prayed to the mountain gods to forgive them. The political value he suggested we should learn is humility. The movement he envisaged was "a pilgrimage which, God willing, will be for life".

Tim Cooper, the co-chair of the Green Party and "very active in the Christian ecology movement", struggled to find the principles that governed both the planet and human politics. The SLDP talks of freedom from poverty, conformity and ignorance, he said. "Planets need this freedom", from poverty of the soil, the conformity of crops, the ignorance of animals. He emphasised the non-materialist values of this new movement — (if only to counter Michael Meadowcroft who had made his speech about how every political current bar his own is "economically determinist"). The liberal green current is to be a "catalyst", said Cooper, shifting the dominant conflict of politics away from left versus right towards Green versus non-Green. However, he clearly sees the Greens as part of the left's team, suggesting that in this pure current radicals can avoid being swept onto the muddied centre ground on which Bryan Gould and Michael Heseltine cohabit.

As to the faint green tinge which now colours both socialists and capitalists, this is mere "social cachet", suggested Sara Parkin, the Greens' International Liaison Secretary. Under this screen of concern, "the plundering goes on as before". Consumer green simply means consuming differently, not consuming less.

The audience had become a bit restive. Was it right to absolve capitalism and blame the human spirit, a young man asked Ms Parkin? You told us to listen to the primitives, said another man. What exactly are they saying? This is all a bit vague, said a chemist. Couldn't you talk about fungi?

Britain's electoral system does indeed disguise the extent to which the determining conflict at the turn of the millennium is socialism versus capitalism or industrial growth versus environmentalism, an ecological zero option. Regardless of how this is resolved, the environmentalists face their own dilemma — the extent to which they side with the powerful conservative voices on the side of environmentalism, from the Duke of Edinburgh to all those religious texts written by rural "primitives" in cultures which had a high regard for nature and little for women, civil liberties or political democracy. Several of these Green voices mourned the fate of South American trees. Not one mentioned the effort to survive of most South American people.

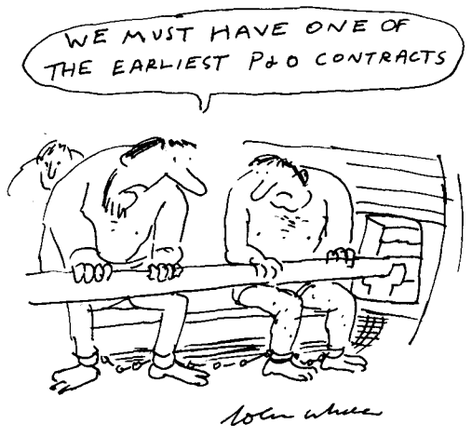
Sarah Benton

Soup kitchens and food parcels for seamen

A PALE blue booklet has been delivered to the house of each of the 2,300 striking members of the National Union of Seamen employed by P&O Ferries. It sets out in details the terms and conditions of employment P&O wants them to agree to. No 6 (d) states that ratings should not have "any outside interests or activities which will or might conflict" with their working at any time of the day or night that they might be called up, not just for their own scheduled duties but to cover for someone else.

In Deal, outside Dover, local NUS members have installed themselves in the miners' union community building. Newspaper cuttings on the P&O strike now adorn the walls; featured prominently is one by the *Daily Mail's* Nigel Dempster on the alleged sex life of P&O group chair Sir Jeffrey Sterling, worth £15 million and "one of Mrs Thatcher's most valued unpaid advisors".

References to Sir Jeffrey are common, and usually bitter. Many of those affected have worked for 10 or 20 years, first for Townsend Thoresen until it was sold to P&O. Almost all have friends or relatives who died aboard the P&O's *Herald of Free Enterprise*. This goes some way to explaining



the solidity of the strike amongst these generally Tory voting, decidedly unmilitant ferry workers.

P&O is asking them to change from working 24 hours on board, then two days off, with a three crew system, to working up to seven days on and seven days off with only two crews. That would create 500 redundancies.

The remaining two crews would be given eight hours off for every 24 on board, totalling 56 unpaid hours on board each week. Crew can take six hours at a time to sleep, but there is no guarantee they will be uninterrupted: even if crew members are asleep they will be expected to get up for drills, sick cover and to help dock or set sail. On the Zeebrugge run the ferries go in and out of port eight times in 24 hours: that's an awful lot of broken sleep.

"And in between that there are tannoy announcements, engine noise, clanking chains: it's impossible to sleep," says steward Sue Haines, who has worked for the ferries for eleven years. "We keep going at the moment knowing that after 24 hours we can spend a day asleep so we are ready for the next shift. If we're expected to do seven shifts in a row, the safety standards on board are bound to suffer. There's only so much a body can do."

They liken their case to lorry drivers who are forbidden to work long hours because of increased accident risk and to nurses and junior doctors who are also insisting that overtired workers run the risk of taking wrong decisions.

Able seaman Jason Groomsbridge, put it this way: "We don't want any more money; we don't want any more time off; we don't want any more crew. We want to maintain our existing agreements and we want working practices which ensure safety — for ourselves and our passengers."

Last Thursday, with the strike entering its seventh week, Deal's women's support group made the first 200 food parcels; the food kitchen has been going for several weeks, serving 450 meals every evening with the help of three women from the NUM support group. A couple of miles down the road is Betteshanger Colliery, one of the most militant during the miners' strike: three out of four local mines are now closed. P&O is one of the few remaining big employers in the area.

P&O's rationale for the changes and the redundancies is the challenge posed by the yet-to-be-built Channel Tunnel. But P&O group profits were up by £100 million last year: £50 million profit came from the ferries.

Jane Dibblin

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20% max for Benn

THE SIZE of Neil Kinnock's victory over Tony Benn in the Labour Party leadership election this October could be greater than either the 70-30 win first mentioned by Benn's supporters or the 80-20 win forecast by more careful analysis this week.

Benn will presumably win more votes in Labour's electoral college than his running mate Eric Heffer did when he stood against Kinnock for the leadership in 1983. Heffer won a total of 6 per cent.

But Labour MPs are no more likely to vote for Benn this time round than for Heffer last time. The only trade unions that are likely to vote for Benn will be those that do not ballot their members. Benn is unlikely to get as much as the 5 per cent of the electoral college that his erstwhile lieutenant Michael Meacher got in his deputy leadership bid five years ago. Let us say 3 per cent.

That leaves you the constituency parties. More of them, it is to be hoped, will ballot their members before casting their vote than before. This will operate in Kinnock's favour, even though there is widespread restlessness over his leadership. There is no way that Benn can get more than the 14 per cent of the college that Meacher won in the constituencies in 1983.

The *maximum* Benn vote, then, is 20 per cent (constituencies 13, MPs 4, unions 3).

John Rentoul

Snooker for Tory women

One of the last bastions of male supremacy crumbled last week, as lady associate members of the 500 member Beaconsfield Conservative Club in Derby (beloved of Edwina Currie) voted in favour of full membership rights for women. For the first time in the club's 102 years, women will be able to play snooker and enter the club's holy of holies, the oak-panelled reading room. (Previously this could be done only at weekends, or on the say so of the male members.)

They will also have full voting rights in respect of club policy. The price of this forward march of progress is that they will be liable to pay the full membership fee. ●

Barbara Rosenblum

Barbara Rosenblum, who wrote in the *New Statesman* about her experience of chemotherapy treatment for cancer (*NS* 12 February) has died. At the time of her death she was also working on a book, with her partner Sandy Butler, called *Cancer in Two Voices*, which documents the psychological, relational, political and social dimensions of her life with the disease.

Before her death she asked that memorial gifts be made to the Fellowship she established. The Barbara Rosenblum Fellowship will assist feminist scholars to study the impact of cancer in the lives of women. The goal of the fellowship is to inform and empower women and demystify the disease. Please send contributions to: Barbara Rosenblum Fellowship, c/o Beth Hess, 2 Hampshire Drive, Mendham, New Jersey 07945, USA. ●

Catholics challenge Alton on abortion

ALTHOUGH the ethics of David Alton's abortion bill have been questioned, its religious pretensions have gone uncontested. As far as official religious opinion is concerned, the bill is faulty only in being too lax.

But last week these assumptions were challenged in an unpublicised ecumenical discussion in the House of Commons, organised by the Women's Reproductive Rights Campaign to "take on Alton on his own ground". Invited guests included the Rev. Donald Barnes of "Christians for a Free Choice", and Frances Kissling, head of the American pressure group "Catholics for a Free Choice."

Kissling had been imported especially for the occasion. Her appearance at the House of Commons provided the most vivid demonstration of the need for "well-known Roman Catholics to speak out". Apart from the rumour of a few dissident nuns in Scotland, the Campaign had found no sign of native Catholic opposition to Alton's Bill.

On the surface it would seem that the Anglo-Catholic community is united in support of anti-abortion legislation. The *Catholic Herald*, a left of centre publication with a circulation of 30,000, had traditionally provided a forum for dissenting views.

Interviewed recently on Radio 4's *Newsstand* editor Terence Sheehy affirmed his commitment to "progressive" coverage of poverty and the war in Nicaragua, but was unequivocal on the subject of abortion. "We give every support to Alton and his Bill," he told Polly Toynbee. "As far as we're concerned it's a very simple matter. Abortion is murder." But features editor Peter Stamford voiced his disquiet with what he perceives as a "conspiracy on abortion" within the Catholic community. "It always comes back to a question of murder," he told the *New Statesman*. "One can't speak out on it." This perhaps accounts for the absence of a declared opposition. But a dissenting faction, if it exists at all in this country, remains well concealed. "If we expressed those views openly on paper, we'd lose three-quarters of our readers."

Whatever their feelings about Alton's Bill, Catholic MPs within the Labour party are highly reluctant to challenge it *as* Catholics. Frank Cook Labour MP for Stockton North, was among the handful of MPs who attended Thursday's discussion which, incidentally, took place as the Bill was amended in another House of Commons Committee room to permit late abortions on the basis of "foetal desirability".

A practicing Catholic who voted for the Second Reading of Alton's Bill, he nonetheless agreed with a colleague that it was a "mischievous bill". He described his sense of the inadequacy of theological guidelines on abortion, and his frustration with a Church which he finds increasingly "monolithic and unheeding". But would he voice these doubts publicly?

"I've never paraded by Catholicism, in fact I've done the opposite. I've always presented myself as a Labour MP who happens to be Catholic." The emphasis of individual religious views has traditionally been viewed within the Labour Party as divisive and "unhelpful". It is a point well taken. But while Labour MPs restrict themselves to private doubt, Alton and his supporters draw on personal religious beliefs to consolidate support among their constituents. Thundering against "easy abortion" from his makeshift pulpit in the House of Lords, the Chief Rabbi Lord Jakobovits was the latest spiritual heavyweight to lend the Bill his support. Unless it is challenged, the pro-life movement will continue to reserve all forms of righteousness for itself.

Amy Gamerman

If the caption fits

No 61

Words failed us when we saw the photos last week. We hope they don't fail you! Captions, speech or thinks bubbles on a postcard please by Monday, 11 April. Ten-pound book token for the winner.

No 59: Winner

Mr Lawson reveals the government spending programme on the NHS for the 1990s. (*Kevin Clancy, Preston.*)

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Sheffield goes Pop

POP GROUPS have done a lot for the Labour Party in recent years. But what has Labour done for them. This question, asked with increasing frequency by young people in the music business, received a clear answer from Sheffield Council this week when they launched their "Cultural Industries Quarter" with astonishing support from pop groups, DJs, film and video-makers, and an audience of nearly 1,000 young people, many of them from local bands. Inside what was once a disused car showroom, a local Latin dance band — Chicos Mios — played Herbie Hancock's *Watermelon Man*, giant video screens showcased the work of local film groups, local fashion designers sold T-shirts, and the crowds milled around enjoying themselves, excited at being in at the beginning of something that is clearly going to be very big — and not just for Sheffield.

For years talented young people in the North have had to come to London to get record deals or make films. It is said that Frankie Goes to Hollywood produced £250 million in their first year, not a penny of which stayed in Liverpool. Sheffield City Council's Employment Committee was aware of this problem and two years ago opened one of the first municipal recording studios and rehearsal room complexes — Red Tape Studios. The council had already seen the success of The Leadmill, a local venue run by a co-operative of local musicians and others, now considered one of the best music venues in the country. Similarly, FON records, another Sheffield initiative, is now one of the major independent record labels in the UK, and decidedly Sheffield-based.

Now they've brought a number of separate initiatives together all under one roof — recording studios, a photographic gallery, rehearsal rooms, film and video facilities, an AVEC (Audio Visual Enterprise Centre). At the opening the Council's initiative received strong support from such well known Sheffield bands as The Human League, Comsat Angels, Heaven 17, Chakk, as well as many other artists. The former two groups had shown their commitment to helping the development of a strong and indigenous Sheffield cultural economy by having their own personal studios built in the centre, available for hire to local bands when possible.

Also there in support were Radio 1 DJ Janice "the big problem we all face is London" Long, Alan Fountain of Channel 4 who has been responsible for commissioning a lot of work from the regions, and Frank Clarke, whose film *Letter to Brezhnev* was another blow against London domination. As a platform they were unanimous in support for developing regional film, music, design and fashion cultures, not only as a way of creating jobs and training young people in new technologies, but also as an expression of regional and local identities and pride. The £500,000 so far invested is only a beginning, said Helen Jackson and Pat Nelson, the two women councillors who have seen the programme through. Already there were people and companies queuing up to take space in the cultural quarter, and plans for expansion are already underway. Sheffield 10, London nil?

Ken Worpole

POLITICAL SKETCH

The struggle continues

Edward Pearce

IS IT THE candidacy of Tony Benn and Eric Heffer which is more instructive or the rage of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley that it should be taking place at all? Of course exasperation is understandable, but it is partly an irritation that Labour is not a different kind of party, one with more obedience, discipline, team spirit and other useful but rather unappealing things.

> *"No politician has ever denounced personality as much as Benn and projected it so ardently"*

The candidacy is tiresome and the process over six months intolerably long. The Conservative press with perfect good conscience, not that it needs any such thing, will have the time of its life. What intense young women nowadays call "role stereotypes" will also have quite an outing, and the worst aspect of Tony Benn, his desire to pose in front of a portable audience which loves him, will have a final run around the paddock. No politician has ever denounced personality so much and projected it so ardently.

Yet if there is a flaw in the present leadership — and I think that just possibly, in the mildest, slightest way there may be one — it is a tendency, consciously and unconsciously, to copy Margaret Thatcher. I once raised the issue of Neil Kinnock's affinities with the lady when speaking to a member of the Labour front bench. He put his face in his hands, then grinned through his fingers and said "don't *say* things like that".

IN LOTS of ways Labour has a very good leadership — brave, responsive to other talents and rightly flexible about policy. The balance against Thatcher in the Commons is not the unequal, Tory-dominated affair which pessimism and the Conservative commentators make it out to be. But one does hear too many complaints about inaccessibility — complaints from backbenchers, that is. Look back to John Prescott's aborted candidacy for the deputyship. It was a mistake, but a mistake born of unhappy relations with the leader; and Prescott, by getting the message of miscalculation and withdrawing early, behaved rather well. It would have been sensible and pleasant for the leader to have said something friendly about such a retreat from collision. Not a bit of it, Prescott was knuckled on the head and dismissed with contempt. Equally, Eric Heffer, a nice man for all his faults, should not have been in this escapade if he had been handled early with more sensibility. Labour is a strange party, full of generous and democratic impulses, equally full of petty jealousies. Hugh Dalton's diaries are strewn with hatreds, his own, ferociously felt, and those of other people, reported with the detached glee of a laboratory scientist confirmed in a certainty. They read like a chronicle of undying malice. And yet we know that Tory politicians discreetly hate each other quite as much. Talk to the friends of Norman Tebbit and those of David Young!

In a sense Neil Kinnock's hard-handed style of leadership can be understood. I found it deeply distressing in those diaries and in Benn Pimlott's biography (rightly apostrophised by Bill Deedes, ex-editor of the *Telegraph* — "Quite wonderful. You must read it") to read about the ambitions and power lustings of men now part of political geology. The ambitions of Jim Griffiths, Alf Robens and Anthony Greenwood seem faintly repulsive, but not as much as do the insane mutual hatreds between Bevanites and Gaitskellites. (Why is it, incidentally, that only the parties of the centre and left are plagued with these biblical formulations? In the 30s there was much talk of Simonites and Samuelites. The no-name centrists are now deep into Owenites and Mergerites. All of it is a throwback to the Old Testament with its Malachites and Jebusites. Perhaps the Conservatives will be in real trouble when the papers get their short word vocabularies adjusted to the Helseltinites.)

SO BASHING people into submission and onto a forced march to reason had something to be said for it. The squabbles, including this six month squabble, are tedious and counter-productive. Even so, was the bashing altogether necessary? The future of all opposition, in which I include the Centre and indeed those Conservatives who will be speaking out of turn, will owe more to the quality of argument, gently and rationally put, than to any amount of horatory brassing reminiscent of milady herself. Opposition has a better future than is widely supposed, but precisely because of negative reaction to Mrs Thatcher and the chainmail handbag Thatcher style. It is worth trying to be unlike her.

Neil Kinnock can beat Tony Benn in the amount of time and effort necessary for the upkeep of a small allotment. He should take him at his word about putting facts and principles before personalities, because the Benn notion of an economy could be demonstrated, without East European smears, as a sort of Burmese autarchy, sans product, sans trade, sans everything.

This should be demonstrated, but very gently, preferably not at those big mood Baths Hall-Wolverhampton gatherings of which Mr Kinnock is over fond. There is no reason for this campaign not to use television and direct itself over the shoulder of the membership direct to the electorate. Labour would never have been in half its messes if its membership had stood in any sort of working relationship to its voters.

With a little skill, the leader could do Labour a great deal of good by defining for those who do not follow politics what Labour is not about. After all, there are implicit charges of betrayal. Most of the people who will be doing the voting in 1991 will want assurances that these are correct. So will a majority voting in this race. Betraying Mr Benn and the pink mist of truth in which he walks could be very good politics. But it should all be *grazioso e con amore* not, as at the press conference, *furioso e con forza*. □

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'No posh words here!' flashes earthy Spark

THE WORDS we use discipline our thoughts.

> NODDY IN QUEER STREET — Aussies say he's a poof! Kiddies' favourite Noddy is getting a new image — because macho Aussies think he's a homo. It's all down to those long, curly eyelashes he flutters. . .

This tosh, by Geoffrey Baker, in the new cleaned-up *Star* provides another thin excuse for the paper to flick through its homophobic lexicon. The *Star*'s choice of poof, homo and, from the Decency-Free Zone of its columnist, Ray Mills, who hones phrases like "a peevish, prattling old poof", is indicative of a self-inforcing verbal bigotry which pervades the tabloid press at its worst.

In the *Star* and the (slicker) *Sun*, consistently the worst offenders, and the other tabloids to a lesser degree, people, meanings, thoughts, events are chopped, up-ended, extruded in a quasi-industrial process to fit the limited vocabulary and word-space available.

In George Orwell's famous essay "Politics and the English Language" he wrote: "[the English language] becomes ugly and inaccurate because our thoughts are foolish, but the slovenliness of our language makes it easier for us to have foolish thoughts." Slovenly language, although it is present throughout the media from quality papers to the News At Ten bongs, is to be found most commonly in the tabloids. The writing in the tabloids is seldom enjoyably surreal, more often abusive, for example a headline from the *Star* last week "Row over poof play for kids", or falling back on dim-witted puns.

Here's a six paragraph piece from the *Sun*'s Martyn Sharp (23 February), about a row caused by a Barnsley railman who allowed a topless model to pose in his signal box.

The first pun was shunted into the headline:

TRACY'S A RAIL BEAUTY

but six more follow. The railman's bosses are all "steamed up" (two) because he allowed the model to show her finer "points" (three), he thought it was just "the ticket" (four) to have the model frolic around his "levers" (five). But BR went "loco" (six) when she showed her lovely "lines" (seven). Tracy is referred to in the following fashion: "a topless model", "the sexy stunner", "blonde Tracy" and, clearly losing puff (see how easy it is) in the fifth para, "topless . . ." (again) ". . .Tracy".

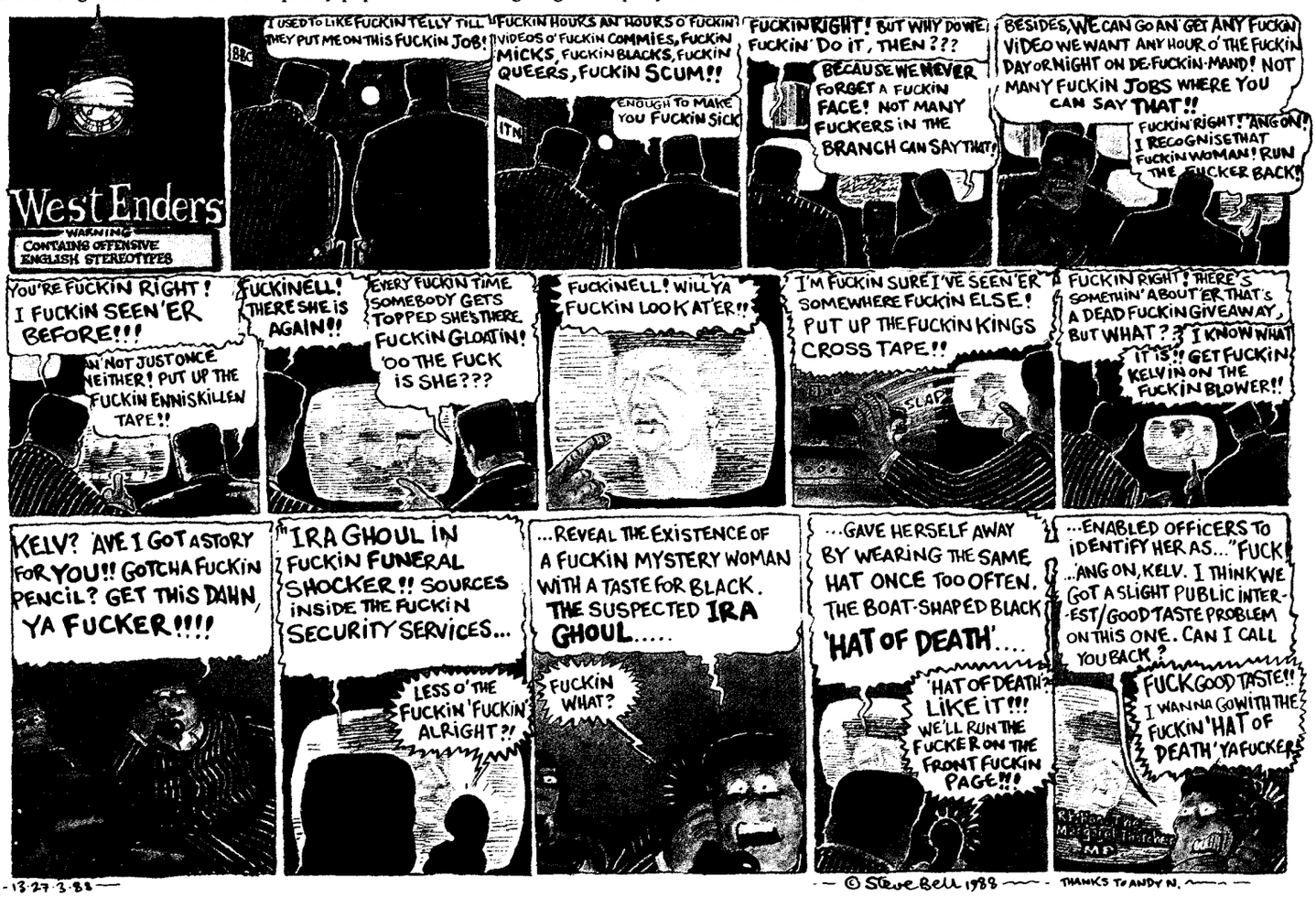
By contrast, *Sun*speak at its best is written by the paper's leader writer and licensed barb, Ron Spark: "At the outset you have to have regard for the audience you are seeking to reach. The leader column on the *Sun* requires special skills." Spark has penned the following felicities, on the NUJ's attempt to stop the re-publication of the children's book "Little Black Sambo": "Penguin should beware giving in to petty dictators" and on the budget "Nigel's 40p whopper simply does it".

Isn't there a danger of brutalisation of thought by using such stubby phrases? Spark disagrees: "Not brutalisation, but over-simplification, yes. We do over-simplify and on occasion we are more courageous than you would have to be if there was lots of space. Sometimes we are unfair to individuals. We could enter a qualification, but there is no space. It's the sacrifice of a smaller point for a larger one."

Spark added that occasionally he used polysyllabic words, but declined to offer any examples. "We wouldn't want to use Latinate languages or French expressions if there is an Anglo-Saxon expression" — an echo of advice in Orwell's essay, with which, sadly, Spark is "not familiar". His favourite period of English is the seventeenth century: "Then the English language was at its best. The speeches of Oliver Cromwell, such as 'I beseech you in the bowels of Christ. . .' are superb. You can't get more direct".

But there are times when present-day *Sun*speak is anything but direct, using the most po-faced words like "thingy", as in "I didn't superglue by hubby's thingy", and "manhood" as in a headline last week: "JOHN'S MANHOOD SET ON FIRE IN JOKE"? "I suppose one fits and the other doesn't. In the leader column if we had to refer to sexuality, we would use 'private parts'. And there's nothing wrong with that good old-fashioned word 'penis'." Quite so.

John Sweeney


West Enders
WARNING
CONTAINS OFFENSIVE ENGLISH STEREOTYPES
I USED TO LIKE FUCKIN TELLY TILL THEY PUT ME ON THIS FUCKIN JOB!
FUCKIN HOURS AN HOURS O' FUCKIN VIDEOS O' FUCKIN COMMIES, FUCKIN MICKS, FUCKIN BLACKS, FUCKIN QUEERS, FUCKIN SCUM!!
ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU FUCKIN SICK
FUCKIN RIGHT! BUT WHY DO WE FUCKIN' DO IT, THEN???
BECAUSE WE NEVER FORGET A FUCKIN FACE! NOT MANY FUCKERS IN THE BRANCH CAN SAY THAT!
BESIDES, WE CAN GO AN' GET ANY FUCKIN VIDEO WE WANT ANY HOUR O' THE FUCKIN DAY OR NIGHT ON DE-FUCKIN-MAND! NOT MANY FUCKIN JOBS WHERE YOU CAN SAY THAT!!
FUCKIN RIGHT! ANGON! I RECOGNISE THAT FUCKIN WOMAN! RUN THE FUCKER BACK!
YOU'RE FUCKIN RIGHT! I FUCKIN SEEN 'ER BEFORE!!!
AN' NOT JUST ONCE NEITHER! PUT UP THE FUCKIN ENNISKILLEN TAPE!!
FUCKINELL! THERE SHE IS AGAIN!!
EVERY FUCKIN TIME SOMEBODY GETS TOPPED SHE'S THERE FUCKIN GLOATIN! 'OO THE FUCK IS SHE???
FUCKINELL! WILLYA FUCKIN LOOK AT 'ER!!
I'M FUCKIN SURE I'VE SEEN 'ER SOMEWHERE FUCKIN ELSE! PUT UP THE FUCKIN KINGS CROSS TAPE!!
SLAP
FUCKIN RIGHT! THERE'S SOMETHIN' ABOUT 'ER THAT'S A DEAD FUCKIN GIVEAWAY, BUT WHAT??
I KNOW WHAT IT IS!! GET FUCKIN KELVIN ON THE FUCKIN BLOWER!!
KELV? AVE I GOT A STORY FOR YOU!! GOTCHA FUCKIN PENCIL? GET THIS DAHN, YA FUCKER!!!!
"IRA GHOUL IN FUCKIN FUNERAL SHOCKER!! SOURCES INSIDE THE FUCKIN SECURITY SERVICES...
LESS O' THE FUCKIN 'FUCKIN' ALRIGHT?!
...REVEAL THE EXISTENCE OF A FUCKIN MYSTERY WOMAN WITH A TASTE FOR BLACK. THE SUSPECTED IRA GHOUL.....
FUCKIN WHAT?
...GAVE HERSELF AWAY BY WEARING THE SAME HAT ONCE TOO OFTEN. THE BOAT-SHAPED BLACK 'HAT OF DEATH'....
'HAT OF DEATH'? LIKE IT!!! WE'LL RUN THE FUCKER ON THE FRONT FUCKIN PAGE!!!
...ENABLED OFFICERS TO IDENTIFY HER AS..." FUCK! ..ANG ON, KELV. I THINK WE GOT A SLIGHT PUBLIC INTEREST/GOOD TASTE PROBLEM ON THIS ONE. CAN I CALL YOU BACK?
FUCK GOOD TASTE!! I WANNA GO WITH THE FUCKIN 'HAT OF DEATH' YA FUCKER!
-13·27·3·88-
© Steve Bell 1988
THANKS TO ANDY N.

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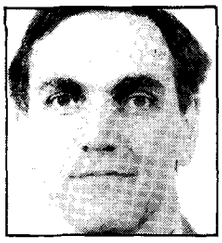

BEN PIMLOTT

'Leadership Listens' — or how to get Labour's adrenalin flowing again

LET'S NOT be too moralistic about the Campaign Group's Easter escapade. Clare Short's comment that "it is a waste of everyone's time" reflected the views of all the most unreformed of the hard left. Yet it presupposes that the time could be better spent. On what, for instance? Making anti-Tory speeches which barely get reported? Submitting papers to the famous Policy Review that never get read? At least the contest will define policy positions and sharpen nerve ends. What the whole labour movement urgently needs is to get the adrenalin flowing again, and this may help.

Certainly it is wrong to see the contest as a return to the bad old days of serious intra-party strife. Tony Benn's threat of an annual contest underlines the point. Instead of total war, this is much more of a seasonal rite. Will it damage Labour's chances? Mr Kinnock (adopting a phrase from this column) has spoken of "a feast for media carnivores". I doubt it. Unless circumstances change, it is hard to see press or public sustaining much interest in Labour's parish-pump affair.

This, of course, is partly because the challenge stands no chance of success. As far as Tony Benn and Eric Heffer are concerned, only the miners among the bigger unions are likely to give their support, along with 30 or so MPs and a third of constituency parties. Once a promising territory for the hard left, the CLPs have shifted fast: a mere 80 voted for the full Campaign Group ticket in last autumn's NEC election, and there have been some notable soft left advances (especially in London) in recent months. The Campaign Group will have to light some fires, therefore, if it is to continue to present itself as the voice of a substantial body even of activist opinion.

For the time being, the contest may isolate still further the already dwindling and beleaguered hard left. New boundaries will be drawn. The resignation of Campaign refuseniks, and their return to the party mainstream could reduce the parliamentary Group to a rump, while the distinction between so-called soft left and the former old right may be further eroded. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to see this as the hard left's last hurrah. There remains a culture of left-wing outsiderdom in the labour movement that thrives on martyrdom: the history of the Labour left is studded with heroic disasters. At the same time, it would be wrong to characterise the challenge as mere petulance or to expect the response to it to be purely dismissive. For though the Kinnock-Hattersley dream ticket may still be invulnerable to direct assault, it has certainly been going through a bad patch.

Partly, this is the fault of the British electorate. If leading any opposition is a headache and leading the Labour Party in opposition is a nightmare, having to lead Labour in the morrow of defeat is to suffer a special form of torture and ought to arouse the sympathy of us all. Few have survived the experience and none has done so unscathed. Clement Attlee in 1951 and Harold Wilson in 1970 were protected by the aura that briefly surrounds any former premier, but even they came under heavy attack. After the 1955, 1979 and 1983 defeats, on the other hand, the Labour leader on each occasion resigned. The only clear precedent for post-1987 (i.e. a Labour Opposition leader suffering electoral defeat and deciding to stay on) is post-1959. On that occasion, Hugh Gaitskell had to fight a bitter civil war because of his desire to modernise the party and his resistance to CND.

AGAINST THIS background, Neil Kinnock may be tempted to console himself with the thought that it is not him, but his situation, that is to blame. He would be mistaken to do so. In particular, he would be unwise to discount or regard as purely mischievous the evidence of rumbling discontent that exists throughout the movement, and which transcends factional lines.

Mr Kinnock is not under serious threat because he has many strengths. He is respected as a shrewd and necessarily forensic party manager. He is liked for his agreeable personality and good labour movement manner. He is admired for the passion he conveys and he is praised — especially at conferences and in election campaigns — for his ability to enthuse and enflame large crowds of committed supporters and sympathisers.

> *'It would be a mistake to see this as the hard left's last hurrah . . . and wrong to characterise the challenge as mere petulance or to expect the response to be purely dismissive'*

On the other hand, like Clement Attlee, he is criticised for lacklustre performances in the House of Commons, and he continues to be charged (so universally that it is surprising he hasn't tried to curb it) with verbosity. He is criticised for his inability to get his mind around the new ideas which he is encouraging his supporters to espouse, while at the same time denouncing socialists who stick to the old ones. He is criticised by fundamentally loyal MPs for what they regard as his authoritarian attitude towards the PLP — there is an intense irritation among such people at his lack of interest in tapping their talents, or in the need to turn a restless disconsolate grouping into a purposeful crusade. Above all, there is resentment at what many see as an inappropriate factionalism in the leader's office that divides the Labour firmament into friend and foe and interprets well-meant suggestions as disloyalty.

During the coming contest, these are some of the points that will be voiced. Despite them, Neil Kinnock will probably continue to be seen at least until the next election as the best leader the Labour Party is likely to get. The same is not quite true of his deputy.

What is a deputy leader meant to do? A leader is supposed to lead. A deputy leader is supposed to — well — balance the dream ticket. Unfortunately the dream ticket outlived its usefulness almost as soon as its initial objective (uniting the party behind Neil Kinnock after the 1983 election) had been achieved. Since then, and especially since June 1987, Roy Hattersley as deputy leader has had no function. He remains an experienced politician with a formidable intellect and an elegant pen, but he has lost his natural constituency: the parliamentary right was routed in last year's shadow cabinet elections and only those of its members who have the drive and energy to compensate for tribal isolation, such as John Smith, have continued to thrive. These qualities the deputy leader at present seems to lack, and he is also being blamed (perhaps unfairly) for Labour's failure to carry conviction at the last election on economic matters, when he was shadow chancellor.

HATTERSLEY will see off any challenge because he is a figure of much greater stature than the available alternatives, and because of a reluctance to rock the boat. Nevertheless, many are predicting a much poorer showing for Hattersley than for Kinnock, and quite a large number of Tribunite abstentions in the Parliamentary Labour Party in the deputy ballot.

The expected entry of John Prescott into the race, withdrawing his withdrawal, will be interesting. It is being argued that, though Prescott cannot win the deputy contest, the impressive support he may receive would make the point about rank-and-file disquiet at leadership style more effectively than the likely result if Heffer stood alone.

Is it sensible? Precisely because a serious challenge to Hattersley would make the contest more exciting, it runs the risk of turning a charade into a bloody, bitter and divisive struggle. That might suit some. But it would be much more likely to damage the party electorally.

To meet the likely extra challenge, the present incumbents would do well to treat the coming leadership election with democratic respect, rather than as treachery or *lèse-majesté*. They are not on trial for their lives. But they should not regard the almost inevitable outcome as something that will automatically enhance their reputations. They need to start talking now — directly, frankly and with humility — to MPs, trade unionists and activists outside the immediate leadership coteries about the kind of Opposition such members of the movement wish to see and the kind of party they want to become.

"Back in the shit!" wrote a shadow minister in his diary after a Bevanite pre-emptive strike in the early 1950s. More or less the same phrase is flying around the party hierarchy this week. But it need not be like that if the episode is treated with confident good sense. "Leadership Listens" would, indeed, provide the best unofficial slogan for the campaign. □

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Benn versus Kinnock: what do they stand for?

The main purpose of Tony Benn's candidature as Labour Party leader, it seems, is to clarify the party's ideology.
PAUL HIRST ***provides a guide***

THIS IS Year Zero of the Conservatives' new drive to turn Britain into a completely individualistic "enterprise society", in which the lure of greed and the goad of want are the sole legitimate motivating forces. Even many of the rich are shocked by the raw barbarism of the budget.

And what is the Labour Party doing? Concentrating all its energies to harness and focus the emerging discontent? Proving to all those sickened by this crass and vulgar pandering to the rich that it is a viable alternative government and dynamic party capable of social leadership? No, of course not, it is busy trying to eradicate itself. It is rethinking basic principles and getting ready to spend six months staging a futile and unnecessary contest for the leadership.

It is said Neil Kinnock relishes the challenge, that it is a final showdown with the left and a chance to cement a new doctrinal consensus that will remove the obsolete liabilities of traditional workerist and collectivist ideology. The "Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values" agreed by Labour's national executive this month is the outcome of two conflicting pressures. The leadership has become uneasy about the lack of a coherent ideological outlook to match the Tories, and sees the need for a new basis of opposition to Thatcherism, one that both reflects recent social changes and addresses new popular attitudes. The left sees it as essential to assert "what we stand for" in the face of perceived opportunism and revisionism on the part of the leadership, to challenge Kinnock now before he becomes unstoppable. The vision of 1988 as an equivalent of the German Social Democrats' 1959 Bad Godesburg Congress where fundementalist socialism was decisively rejected in an act of idelogical renewal is a comforting one, but an illusion. The debate on principles and the leadership contest will move Labour no further forward. The party will be pilloried in the media and be little better off than it is now.

Why? Because the debate on principles is actually an evasion of the real issues. The revised national executive-endorsed "Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values" is staggeringly bland. It will inspire or convince nobody, left or right, inside or outside the party. It raises fundamental issues that need arguments to justify them and yet is simply lacking in analytic bite. It is short of specific attention to what the Tories have done, will do and what to do about it. Frankly it would better have been left unwritten. It will merely confirm to those who *do* want new ideas to guide the Labour Party that its institutions and normal procedures are just incapable of producing them. It augurs ill for the whole policy review process.

Gesture politics

As for the leadership contest, it is amazing that anyone could entertain it. It is a diversion of political energy and offers once again the image of Labour as a divided party to be peddled in the media. Labour isn't divided and the remnants of the Bennite left will be trounced, but the damage is done all the same. A vast Tory majority makes effective parliamentary opposition difficult, but Labour seems determined to negate what assets it does have by its own actions. While it may be legitimate to round on the Labour left and condemn it for yet another quixotic retreat into gesture politics, it is also right to ask what kind of party it is in which such absurdities can happen. There is widespread discontent with the ineffectiveness of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership and this is what gives Benn and Heffer the confidence to stand. Yet even many of the Campaign Group MPs see the contest as damaging and do not support it. Neil Kinnock is the most effective leader we are likely to get. None of the *real* alternatives to him, and Benn is not one of them, is really that much more able or eloquent, and what is more none of them has any

The Benn Credo

We believe:

That there should be certain rights which must be won and maintained. The right to life, free from fear, oppression, ignorance, preventable ill-health or poverty. The right to useful and satisfying work, balanced with leisure, to meet the needs of society. The right of everyone to receive an income sufficient to maintain a decent standard of living. The right to a good home for all in which to live, bring up children and care for all dependents... The right to enjoy dignity, and a full life, in retirement in suitable accommodation, free from financial anxieties, with proper medical, and other facilities, including personal care, necessary to make that possible. The right to expect that any government in power will work for peace and justice, and will not provoke international conflict or hostility or divert resources from essential purposes to build up the weapons of mass destruction...

In democracy. We are deeply committed to the democratic process in the political, economic, social and administrative spheres, and believe that no person should have power over others unless they are accountable to, and removable by, those over whom they exercise that power or by elected representatives of the people.

In Socialism. We are socialists because we believe that these rights cannot be fully realized in any society under capitalism, which, as in Britain now, has entrenched by law, the power of Capital over Labour, and subordinated human values to the demand for profit, at the expense of social justice and peace.

In internationalism. We are an internationalist party believing that all people, everywhere are entitled to demand the same rights.

In the rights of self-determination. We believe that the people of every nation have the right to govern themselves and to be free from any form of colonial or imperial domination.

In solidarity. We believe that we have a moral responsibility to defend all those who are attacked for protecting their own democratically gained rights, and with this in mind we are establishing workplace branches so that each can help others more effectively.

That conscience must be above the law. We assert the right of all people to follow their own conscientious beliefs even if it involves them in breaking the law; and that while there may be a legal obligation to obey the law there is no moral obligation to obey unjust laws; but we also know that those who break the law on moral grounds, may face punishment for their beliefs, and the final verdict on their actions will rest with the public and with history.

In the rights of all to their beliefs. We believe that socialist ideas which have been evolved in this country and abroad, over the centuries have given us a rich inheritance; but we do not believe that truth can be captured in any one creed to which all must subscribe under threat of expulsion or exclusion; and we respect the rights of all members of the party to hold their own views, and to organise within the party to promote them, being convinced that diversity of opinion adds strength to our cause.

In progress through collective action. We believe, in the light of our own experience, that the only secure basis for social progress must lie in collective action, and that those who have the privilege of representing us, at all levels, must remain accountable for what they say and do, and that no one can demand blind obedience, from us, in the name of loyalty or unity.

Extract from a paper called "Aims and Objectives of the Labour Party" tabled by Tony Benn at Labour's national executive in February but not accepted.

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John Minnion

> *The Labour leadership should be offering a shortlist of how to behave in order to win the next election: No. 1: don't waste time on irrelevant waffle; No. 2: fight the enemy not one another*

better ideas or policies than Kinnock has. Moreover, Kinnock is not likely to be shifted one inch toward placating the left by Benn's candidacy; if anything, the reverse. The whole thing is pointless.

The Benn document is prefaced by an Agenda which emphasises the need to analyse and study, but for all its emphasis on tackling questions, the two issues not on the agenda are Labour's current unelectability and the severe limits to radical socialist policies that the Tories' "reforms" will have created. If Benn believes that the class struggle is as fierce as he says it is, he ought to take the class enemy more seriously: the Tories *can* try to eradicate socialism. Even if they fail, as they will, to eliminate a democratic socialist party as the opposition they can so constrain its actions that the aims and objectives of both these manifestos become utterly abstract and inappropriate. Benn's statement of aims and objectives starts with a long list of "rights", many of which are unintelligible as legal or moral rights in any normal sense (how can one have a *right* to be "free from financial anxieties"?). This list amounts to the "right" to expect one will live in a just, fair, free and equal world — well, I suppose one can hope, as Benn urges us to believe in a better future.

Pie in the sky

To call it pie in the sky would be to dignify this catalogue of rights with an undue degree of credibility. Benn's document is also much more concrete and specific than the one the national executive approved in what policies it proposes, from the abolition of the House of Lords to the legal prohibition of blood sports, taking in the elimination of nuclear weapons and power plants and leaving the European Community along the way. It is the classic left Labour *list* — a set of "policies" desired by the fragments that make up the Labour left coalition, but without a coherent political rationale or any estimation of the political conditions in which such things are attainable. It includes everything that has made Labour unelectable and a good deal besides.

A specific listing of election-losing policies and a bland and abstract statement that could have been written for a social democratic party in almost any Western democratic country in the last 40 years, this hardly makes for an encouraging electoral contest. If these are the alternatives then Labour is fighting about which set of ruling illusions it should subscribe to. One has to remember all the time in reading this stuff that there are still pragmatic and effective politicians in the Parliamentary Labour Party, that Labour has strong instincts for political survival, and that the Tories may just bury themselves through sheer arrogance and an obsession with objectives far removed from those of many of their supporters let alone the mass of centrist opinion. Power tends to corrupt, and it has corrupted the Tories; but their indulgent celebration of authoritarianism promises to do more than this: to alienate them completely from

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the concerns of ordinary people. Shirley Porter's discomfiture over the selling of Westminster's cemeteries for 15p is merely a straw in the wind. It is true that Thatcher's Conservatism is a new phenomenon, but it is not the populist one the image of "Thatcherism" conveys.

Eric Hobsbawm, once Kinnock's intellectual guru, writing in April's *Marxism Today*, also finds the Kinnock-Hattersley document disappointing but he sets it against an apocalyptic vision of modern Toryism, calling it "an experimental model for a post-democratic bourgeois society in the 1980s, as fascism (which was a very different species of political animal) was the model for bourgeois regimes in the 1930s which felt they could no longer afford democracy". Mrs Thatcher has used the inherent centralism and authoritarianism of British government for her own purposes, but she didn't invent them, and she has had to break precious few "efficient parts" of the Constitution in order to do it.

Crazed Tories

If things go on as they are we shall have to hope that the Tories make themselves unelectable by their own crazed, selfish and divisive actions in this parliament and that the Democrats are still too dazed from their own battles to regain the centre ground. The one thing to be said for the leadership contest is that it is early and may well be forgotten by the next election. It also shows that Labour's weaknesses constantly recur, and that all the effort to present the image of a reformed party can be so easily undone. Labour is not now in the midst of civil war as it was in 1981-83, the organised ultra-left has been curbed, and efforts have been made to modernise the party's campaigning style. This is all true, but the media *impact* of the leadership contest will be almost as bad as if the party were actually riven by civil war.

The two documents which can be said to serve as "manifestos" for the election, the Kinnock-Hattersley statement of aims and values and Benn's alternative proposal, both show a vacant inattention to the real issues before the Labour Party. It is much more important to consider what is happening to the country than it is to square present doctrine with the ideological past (Benn) or trim that past toward what people outside the party think in the present (Kinnock). Aims which are not directly related to immediate tasks are pointless, they aren't aims at all but pious hopes or comforting illusions. The only worthwhile statement as the basic guide to party policy is one which diagnoses the major political and economic problems and then shows what one *can* do to tackle them. That sort of realism is desperately needed by party members but also as a message to the electorate. Honesty and realism — limited but attainable objectives — are essential when the Tories offer illusions, utopias, hype and economy with the truth. Principles emerge in working out this sort of realistic analysis of what we can do. Flatulent statements of what we would like to happen simply show that we have no operative principles or attainable aims.

The Kinnock-Hattersley statement is commendable in making liberty the core of democratic socialism. But the result is to turn a valuable idea into a froth of words, because nothing is said effectively to undo the view of Labour as the party of collectivism and bureaucracy, regulations and controls. The document is just too vague, and fails to show how a government committed to individual liberty can attain social and economic equality *without* collectivism and controls. I happen to think that a defence of *democracy*, not a vague endorsement of "liberty", is the timely thing to do: to make the erosion of democratic government by the Conservatives the starting point and then to say how one would go about attainable political reforms that would increase democratic control of government. Likewise, the statement is so unspecific about the underlying problems of the British economy that its section on the economy amounts to an evasion of the issues: it is wholly taken up by matters like the role of science in technological innovation, environmentalism, social ownership and the place and role of markets in democratic socialism. All worthy points but lacking in any perspective of what the economic situation will be like in the 1990s when Labour's next chance to govern comes.

Starting out with problems and constraints is vital given the Tories' claims to have created a prosperous and successful economy, otherwise one offers an alternative set of economic illusions. The room for grand principles and large changes will be small for a future government constrained by privatisations, by a growing balance of trade crisis, and by a very internationalised economy at the mercy of domestic and foreign money and capital markets which are beyond government regulation. One must start with the world the Tories have made, not with a bland set of principles that could have been written for Sweden.

But Mrs Thatcher needs electoral legitimacy to act as she has, knows it and knows the massive popular commitment to parliamentary democracy in this country. She has ruthlessly exploited the vast capital of docility that that commitment and the established British political traditions give to her. She is not fool enough to imagine that she can rule without elections, however hard she tries to stack the odds against the opposition. A "post-democratic bourgeois society" is not possible while there are free elections; although very arrogant, unaccountable and undemocratic government is. Labour has to cling to this one straw. Winning next time against Mrs Thatcher is more important than any other "aim" or "objective".

Perhaps the Kinnock-Hattersley document should have started by saying this and then offering a short list of the ways to behave in order to win. No.1 ought to be: Don't waste time on irrelevant waffle. And No.2: Fight the enemy, not one another. □

Professor Paul Hirst is a member of the Socialist Philosophy Group.

Statement of Democratic Socialist Aims and Values

1. The true purpose of democratic socialism, and therefore, the true aim of the Labour Party, is the creation of a genuinely free society, in which the fundamental objective of government is the protection and extension of individual liberty irrespective of class, sex, age, race, colour or creed. Socialists understand that the rights of that free society can only have real meaning for men and women who possess the economic and political strength to exercise them. To socialists, freedom is much more than the absence of restraint or the assertion of the rudimentary rights of citizenship. Protection from coercion — by state, corporate or private power of every sort — is only the first step towards liberty. When so many men and women cannot afford to make the choices which freedom provides, the idea that all enjoy equal and extensive liberty is a deception. Unless men and women have the power to choose, the right to choose has no value.

8. Our concern as socialists is with individual liberty. But this is not the doctrine of callous individualism. A society based on ruthless social and economic competition entrenches the privileges of a minority whilst restricting the rights of the rest of society. Real freedom can only be extended by co-operative action, by participation in democratic institutions at work, in the community and in public life, and by collective provision to gain and sustain individual liberty.

14. Democratic socialism draws its purpose and rationale from the fact that men and women live, by necessity and choice, in cooperation with each other. In the community of the family, the workplace, the trade union, the sports club or the voluntary organisation, there is a sense of belonging and common purpose. The same is true in the wider social, economic and political community. We depend upon each other to resolve common problems and to provide essential services. In our daily lives we know that it is better to work together. That is the fundamental principle of socialism. The only alternative is to allow choices, resources and power to be the preserve of the few.

29. Many of the elements of industrial success are in scale and scope beyond the competence and often beyond the commitment of the individual employer and the individual firm. Large and consistent investment in research, design and development, in schooling and in further and higher education and in training will depend in this country, as they do in all our more successful competitors, on a positive lead from government.

35. It is immoral as well as irrational to distribute some goods and services according to the market principle...

36. But, in our pursuit of extended freedom, enhanced liberty and increased choice there are many areas of the economy where market allocation and competition between companies, whether privately owned or socially owned, is essential to serving the consumer by meeting changing needs, responding to demand and promoting efficiency.

Extracts from amended statement drafted by Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley agreed by 21 votes to 4 at Labour's national executive last week.

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KEN RUSSELL'S
ABC OF BRITISH MUSIC
SATURDAY AT 10.20PM

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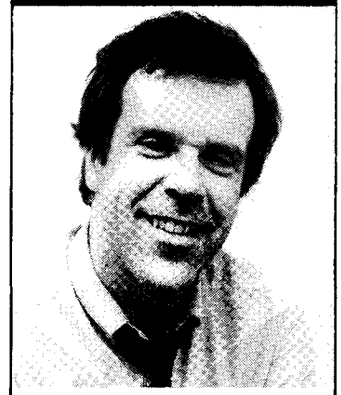
STATE OF THE NATION



John Lloyd

Biting the single-union bullet

RON TODD has attracted a few defenders for his opposition to a single-union deal with the engineers at Ford's proposed new plant in Dundee. Michael Meacher, Labour's employment spokesman, detects a conspiracy between the company and the government, while Simon Jenkins, the *Sunday Times* columnist, has turned the table on the critics, arguing that Todd was doing no more (actually, less) than the better heeled demand of the Inns of Court, the British Medical Association, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians and other such organs of bourgeois domination. The Todd defence is the wholly cogent one that his responsibility is to defend the conditions of his existing TGWU members who might well be threatened by a lower-paid Trojan horse in Dundee — not to 500 future AEU members.

There is a broader ground on which he might fight, though he has not chosen to make it explicit. That is, that by acquiescing in the terms which Ford has laid out, the trade union movement is implicitly recognising that *lower pay can create jobs*. This view, for long a centrepiece of Tory employment policy, has never benefited from so graphic an endorsement as Ford has given it in the past two months: and it is the acceptance of *that*, rather than the single-union deal, which has gagged in the throats of the TGWU and Ken Gill's and Clive Jenkins' MSF. (It is not surprising that the government has made little of this: it has seized on the issue as one where it can most embarrass the unions by being seen to support the "progressive" engineers against the "neanderthal" transport workers. Stressing the wage-cutting point would embarrass its new-found allies.)

What, then, is the argument *against* Todd?

It comes down to this: he is right in every official and unofficial canon of the labour movement; he is acting fully in accordance with the logic of his position, as leader of a powerful sectional interest within the framework of a collection of sectional interests whose common interests are beginning to fragment very badly, perhaps terminally; he is right to be suspicious about the role a Dundee plant could play in the future over the national Ford agreements (the "blue book"); but *the water is lapping about his feet and he cannot command it back*.

There are two reasons why the TUC had to support the engineers in this matter (though it may now be too late to be relevant): the first is short term, the more important long term.

We know the first. The trade unions cannot put themselves in the position of frightening away jobs. Their largest moral card is their defence of employment: they can now never play it without the fear that it will be trumped by Dundee. The TUC knew that, and fought to enforce it: but its powerlessness, dictated by generations of union leaders unwilling to cede it authority, has never been so poignantly illuminated.

Transnational companies are not so free of constraint as some on the left like to believe: once significant, long term investment has been committed to a country, then both the government and the trade union movement in that country have some bargaining leverage. But *before* the investment is committed, the transnationals really can conduct beauty contests of the kind which were so vividly illustrated in Philip Bassett's *Despatches* report on no-strike deals last Friday: they can insist on a range of guarantees and industrial relations structures which inevitably suit them; in many — probably, now, most — cases they can reasonably expect that they will be able to run their business without any union at all (Ford would have been the first foreign-owned electronics plant set up in Scotland in the past decade which recognised unions) — and if they do not get satisfaction, they can go elsewhere.

Further, Ford is not just shifting its industrial relations style for the hell of it. The Nissan plant in Sunderland, with lower wage costs, far less demarcation, a single union to which most workers don't belong, has put very large pressure on all of the UK mass market car makers which they can only express by negotiating, or enforcing, widespread changes in working practices. The competitive productivity spiral in manufacturing is now intense: or, to put it another way, the manual working class and industrial management are bearing the brunt of global restructuring, against which we can only shield ourselves at the cost of preserving what would ultimately become Polish levels of inefficiency. Once the economy has been structured to be increasingly responsive to international market pressures, there is little protection against the downward wages spiral — nor, as a matter of fact, against the *upward* spiral of senior managerial "salary packages". The engineers have bitten this bullet, the TGWU has not.

THE second reason we are less familiar with: not surprisingly, for it has scarcely been deployed. The engineers *do* have an alternative in mind which is not just — as their opponents within the labour movement would say — sweetheart unionism. An outline of their thinking is contained in a paper by the AEU president Bill Jordan, written for the TUC special review body which is about to pronounce on single-union deals. In it, Jordan briefly surveys the experience of unions in West Germany and Sweden with works councils — and concludes that these much derided institutions have been successful both in promoting workers' interests and in maintaining them at a time when the supposedly much stronger British unions were losing out dramatically. He says they are "a vital weapon in the defence of working class interests"; points to the fact that unions tend to dominate them even in companies where union members are in a minority, because non-unionists vote for experienced union activists to sit on the councils; and rightly forecasts that "with the drive towards harmonisation of the West European market — in theory to be achieved by 1992 — the demand from labour's side for European level works councils for European companies will grow and it will be difficult to reject this right as they already grant it in their own country."

JORDAN IS frank: this is managing capitalism, so that workers get a better deal from it; he stresses that companies "remain the dominant institutional force within the worker's life . . . the company is a durable institution and workers' identification with it persists even if the company is nationalised, in the private sector, foreign-owned, big or small, run by remote management or a hands-on owner." The system he proposes increases identification with the company: it is also aimed at making the company's management identify more with their workers.

He is also after something still more utopian. He argues that those countries which enjoy economic success commonly demonstrate not just a participative industrial culture, but have unions organised *industrially*: that is, one union for engineering, one for teaching and so on: thus, overwhelmingly, companies sign single-union deals because there is only one union with which to sign deals. General unionism, by contrast, appears to lead to a decline in membership (he instances France — though that is a bad example, because there the unions have tended to concentrate on organising the politically aware cadres rather than the mass of workers: they tried to change, but probably too late).

His vision, then, is one heavily borrowed from West Germany: and to be sure, the system is both productive enough and successful enough to make it worth borrowing. Indeed, it is arguably the only system, in broad terms, with which a social democratic state could work: one where state, employers and unions had a common support for a mixed economy, common pursuit of productivity and sales, common acceptance of greater worker involvement and the sense to tailor the system to getting a consensus across the political divides.

I hope he succeeds, but it is very late in the day. The vision depends on much stronger actors at TUC and CBI levels than we have ever had — and they are arguably weaker now than they have been since the war. There are few voices raised for greater worker participation: many appear to regard it as a debate which came, and went for good, in the mid-1970s. Further, the pattern of union mergers is creating a series of general unions — the TGWU, the GMB, the MSF — all Battlestar Unionaticas, lurching about the galaxy looking for members in any and every sector. This "pattern" will be very difficult to unpick: engineering workers, for example, are to be found in all three of these unions as well as in the AEU.

Nevertheless, it represents a pole of organisation round which the other unions could, if they felt impelled, unite. It is perhaps the *only* ground which they could occupy which might see them regaining some of their lost power, or at least stopping its further leaching away. It is unlikely to succeed: for that reason, among others, prospects for the union movement continue to be gloomy. Dundee, or rather the situation which it illuminates, is rightly seen as a disaster. □

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EXCLUSIVE

The making of the political A-team

The Benn-Heffer challenge for the Labour leadership comes at just the moment when the incumbents are planning to adopt a new "tough" and "abrasive" image. The New Statesman has obtained details of the secret plan.

JOLYON JENKINS *reports*

NEIL KINNOCK and other prominent Labour Party figures should undergo a dramatic transformation in the way they present themselves to the electorate, according to a secret blueprint drawn up by the party's Campaigns and Communications Director, Peter Mandelson. Kinnock, suggests Mandelson, has to adopt more of a "tough bastard" image.

The plans are set out in a five-page highly restricted memorandum from Mandelson to Charles Clarke, Kinnock's chief adviser and minder. The document was also circulated at the start of March to Patricia Hewitt, Neil Kinnock's press adviser, David Hill, Roy Hattersley's political adviser, and Frank Dobson, coordinator of the recent "Labour Listens" campaign. For the moment the plans are apparently being withheld from Larry Whitty, Labour's general secretary.

Mandelson's proposals aim to take the Labour Listens campaign forward into a new stage, called "Labour Leads", this autumn. The recommendations have their origin in private opinion polls carried out since the election, together with qualitative attitudinal research which elicits voter opinions on Labour's style and image.

One surprising finding is that the election party political broadcast which focused on Kinnock himself (and which Senator Joe Biden plagiarised) was not particularly effective. "The broadcast, though well received by the media, appears to have reinforced the views of those who already intended to vote Labour, while making little headway among skilled manual and clerical workers," writes Mandelson. "If anything, it is possible to discern a negative effect among these key workers who expressed the opinion that the broadcast was too 'sentimental', and 'soppy'. The phrase 'Welsh windbag' occurred disturbingly often in the attitudinal research."

This leads Mandelson to conclude that the current emphasis on "caring" is misplaced, and that in "Labour Leads" the party needs to project a far more aggressive, go-getting image to appeal to Labour's lost voters. "Our target voters, in particular A, B, and C1 electors in the key West Midlands marginals, are impressed by the forthright style of certain of our opponents, in particular Norman Tebbit and Nicholas Ridley. Current trends in advertising, for example the Vauxhall Cavalier, British Airways 'red eye' and 'If everything in life was as reliable as a Volkswagen' commercials, also suggest that ruthlessness is a selling point among consumers. Informal soundings undertaken by the SCA [Shadow Communications Agency, the informal consortium of Labour 'ad people'] confirm that this can be highly effective and that we are failing badly here.

"Bryan Gould, in particular, is perceived as 'soft' and 'cuddly', and he should perhaps be moved sideways out of the public eye. In theory this suggests that we need to bring to the forefront those who can project the party in a rather more abrasive fashion." Mandelson adds that a computer analysis of the Parliamentary Labour Party threw up the names of Eric Heffer and Dennis Skinner, although political considerations clearly rule them out, as well as those of Robin Cook and Gordon Brown. His memo was written before the Benn-Heffer challenge to Kinnock and Hattersley.

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

From: Peter Mandelson
To: Charles Clarke

"LABOUR LEADS" CAMPAIGN: IMAGES AND PRESENTATION

for example. Bryan Gould in particular is perceived as "soft" and "cuddly", and he should perhaps be moved sideways out of the public gaze. In theory this suggests that we need to bring to the forefront those who can project the party is a rather more abrasive fashion. A computer analysis threw up the names of Eric Heffer and Dennis Skinner, but they are clearly unacceptable. Robin Cook and Gordon Brown are both effective performers, and should assume a higher profile.

According to Walworth Road sources, Mandelson has been particularly scathing about Benn and Heffer since their decision, referring to them as the Campaign Group kamikaze artists. In an aside, he notes: "It is probably safe for us to continue to press for Ken Livingstone to be invited onto the *Jonathan Ross Show.*"

Light jogging

Roy Hattersley, according to the internal research, has suffered almost as badly from his caricature in *Spitting Image* as David Steel. "Roy needs to shake off the image of a bon viveur with a speech defect. Photo opportunities of him playing squash might help here, but it would be safer to stick to a little light jogging."

One of Mandelson's suggestions is that the party should hire John Syer, the psychologist who worked with Tottenham Hotspur in the early 1980s to improve the team's motivation. Syer's recent efforts with Queen's Park Rangers are the subject of a forthcoming *QED* programme.

"Syer is a humanistic psychologist, who provides mental training for teams by helping them to formulate their goals, communicating more with each other, and welding together the team as a coherent whole," Mandelson explains. "We must take an eclectic approach and not be afraid to learn from advances in fields that are very different from our own."

Kinnock, says Mandelson, presents special problems. "Neil Kinnock is still the leader of the Labour Party," he writes, "but we have to re-orientate him in voter perceptions. He needs to be presented as an *achiever,* and I would welcome suggestions on how we might do this. Meanwhile, I think we can all learn from the experience of Dick Gephardt [US Democratic presidential candidate], who has undergone Personal Effectiveness Enhancement Training, or PEET."

Mandelson, we understand, recently made a secret visit to the Democratic National Committee HQ in Washington to study the latest political marketing and communications technology. He explains that PEET, a system devised by the Yale organisational anthropologist Walter Zuchinni, is a non-holistic variant on assertiveness training. Zuchinni, author of *Informed Opportunism in the Business Environment* and the more populist *Renewal and Resurgence — how to improve your effectiveness,* is highly sought-after by American politicians and business people. His brainchild, PEET, isolates specific areas of underperformance and works on them individually through group therapy.

"Tentatively, we would identify posture and conversational dynamics as areas where Neil's performance can be enhanced," says Mandelson. "The whole front bench, with a few exceptions, would also benefit from PEET. We must also make the most of the strengths we have. Gordon Brown [Labour's shadow secretary to the Treasury] is particularly popular among women voters, rating 71 per cent overall, and we need to find ways to make the most of that."

Speaking from Yale this week, Zuchinni confirmed that he had received tentative approaches from Walworth Road. "I did it for Dick [Gephardt], so I guess I could do it for your Mr Kinnock," he told the *New Statesman.* "The videos they sent me are interesting. Mr Kinnock isn't a tall man, but we can make him look taller, and voters go for that. We also need to teach him how to interrupt television interviewers without being rude, and how to look stern and serious without just looking mad. It might sound screwball, but these things really work. In today's political environment the only constant is change. The Labour Party would be fools not to try it." □

Additional reporting by Alexander Cockburn in New York, and by John Rentoul, Beatrice Webb and Stuart Weir in London.

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The sphinx inside an enigma

DAVID S. BELL *assesses Mitterrand's chances of winning his second term as President in the two-round contest on 24 April and 8 May, and what a win might mean for his personal faction, known as the Socialist Party*

Thank heaven for little girls and boys — they grow up to vote in the most delightful way

FRANÇOIS MITTERRAND'S career — he is 71 — has been a long one, during which he has gone through more positions than the Kama Sutra to entice the French electorate. He started "stuffing people's ears" with reactionary monarchism as a law student in the 30s; he was a Resistance member; after the war he was an anti-Communist; and in the Fourth Republic one of the principal wheeler dealers. It was only with the Fifth Republic that, in the presidential elections of 1965, Mitterrand began to incarnate the hopes of the left — he was the joint Socialist/Communist candidate, but he was not at that time a Socialist nor had he ever been. In 1971, however, Mitterrand took his small band of followers into the Socialist Party, became its leader a day later, and the ascension of the Socialists — as Mitterrand's party — began. They became the biggest French political party and Mitterrand won the presidency in 1981. While the left in France is dependent on a Mitterrand victory in the May elections, his current avuncular persona is merely the last of many images.

The story of the ascension of the Socialist Party in the 70s is not a simple one. The process of amalgamating the fragmented left into a coherent party and making an alliance with the Communist Party at the same time was like building a pyramid out of billiard balls. But what impresses commentators is Mitterrand's persistence as much as his political skill. He is a manipulator and a master of ambiguity: a sphinx inside an enigma, wrapped in a riddle. The sort of politician who cuts his bread with a corkscrew.

Mitterrand has also been left on the canvas many times in the past. After the "scandal" during the Mendes France government, the "Observatoire affair", blunders in May 1968 and then the sabotage of his left alliance by the Communists in 1977, Mitterrand was counted out. This was a mistake. His ability to drag himself up and come back for another round is the mark of a willpower rare even in politics, where egos are notably inflated. This is why Mitterrand declared his candicacy for the presidency last week, although he seemed to hesitate.

Mitterrand is a strategist and a rhetorician, not a thinker. He has the ability to find talented individuals, promote them and get them to work in a team; but do not go to his works for philosophical thoughts on government. There are French politicians, notably Mendes France and Rocard, who stand comparison with Crosland, Hattersley, Gould and other scribblers on the British left, but not Mitterrand. Mitterrand's works are filled with musings about flowers — often wrong — and give no hostages to fortune. His main ploy, the alliance with the Communists, was a strategy for achieving power, not a philosophy, and is, in any case, now dead.

When the right won a sweeping victory in the 1986 National Assembly elections, Mitterrand was also counted out, but this was to underestimate the man. Although forced to appoint a right wing government led by the neo-Gaullist Jacques Chirac, his masterly inactivity ("the government's good works are to my credit, their mistakes are not my doing") has enabled his popularity to rise to historic levels — according to polls he is now at his most popular. Mitterrand, in the absence of real power, has turned the situation to his advantage so that he is the likely presidential winner.

Although no shoo-in candidate, opinion polls show Mitterrand ahead of all challengers on the first ballot (24 April) and the winner, by a good margin (8 per cent over Barre and 11 per cent over Chirac), on the second (8 May). "*Tontonomania*", mania for "uncle" Mitterrand, however, should be treated with caution, as there are still large numbers of undecided voters, the left is badly placed in local elections (in the polls it hovers around 44 per cent) and the climate of opinion is much more conservative than in the 70s. If the right can unify (a big "if"), they are in a comparatively better position than in 1981 when Mitterrand was elected.

Minor candidates

There are probably going to be several minor presidential candidates (if they can get the required signatures of 500 local councillors), but only the right's two personalities Barre and Chirac are important. The significance of the ecologist, the dissident Communist Juquin, the official Communist Lajoinie and the barking right wing extremist Le Pen is that their votes will be different on the second ballot (or go into abstention). Mitterrand needs as many of these as possible to win. The chance of Le Pen or Lajoinie going through to the second ballot is less than that of Tony Benn or Eric Heffer winning the Labour Party leadership. This has already begun to make things difficult, as they have to explain why people should "waste" their vote for a minor candidate in a tight competition. The Communist vote is very anti-right and will transfer to Mitterrand but so — curiously — will a percentage of Le Pen's.

If Mitterrand over the last two years has been transformed into an avuncular figure, other candidates are less reassuring. Raymond Barre has been the conservative front runner almost consistently since 1983, but in February he slipped behind Prime Minister Chirac as the right's favourite. Barre was prime minister from 1976-81 and left office extremely unpopular. He comes over as the boring elder brother who always does his homework and is prone to remind you to do yours. Yet his campaign has been nicely calculated. Although a supporter of the government he has kept his distance and claimed to be aloof from the quotidian wrongdoings of electoral politics. This is an ancient but effective strategy: I am no orator as Brutus is, but a plain, blunt man. Moreover, Barre's distance from power as well as his scepticism enable him to criticise Mitterrand effectively and to criticise the Gaullist government of the last two years. Barre's warmest supporter came from the centre party — the Christian Democrats in the main — but he is no "wet" and his period as prime minister was one of economic austerity. His strong point is *in fact* economics and his supporters will have to shift the campaign debate firmly onto that ground if he is to make the running as the right's candidate and come ahead of Chirac on the first ballot. Barre has otherwise been vague about policy promises although he has, through his condemnation of co-operation with Mitterrand, stressed the need for a strong presidency again.

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'Chirac's impetuosity means he is slightly implausible outside Gaullist ranks. He is, however, very good at running for office even if not very good at holding it'

Chirac was prime minister under Giscard from 1974-6 and could be the hyperactive younger brother who smashes all the toys and invariably has some new enthusiasm — like a toad in a jar. He has now been prime minister under Mitterrand's presidency since 1986 which makes it difficult for him to attack Mitterrand directly. Chirac's main advantage is the control of the biggest, best organised party on the right — the neo-gaullist RPR — but his disadvantage is his inconsistency. He has seen more roads to Damascus than a Syrian commuter and was in part responsible for the defeat of his own party's candidate in 1974 and then of the man he helped to elect (Giscard) in 1981. Chirac's strategy of stroking the crazies, of trying to win over the National Front electorate by tough law and order and anti-immigrant measures, was only slightly successful and caused major problems (he had to back down after demonstrations and strikes). His impetuosity, for example wearing a Walkman and declaring an admiration for Madonna, means that he is slightly implausible outside Gaullist ranks. He is, however, very good at running for office even if not very good at holding it.

Assembly power

However, a victory for Mitterrand in May will not necessarily mean a change in the locus of power, which lies with the right-wing Assembly majority. If Mitterrand were to win the presidentials with, say, 54 per cent or over he could probably dissolve the Assembly to obtain a Socialist majority, as happened in 1981. Although this is possible it is very unlikely, because a personal victory for Mitterrand is not the same thing as support for the Socialists. (Mitterrand's personal appeal is much wider than that of his party.) A second possibility, and the most likely if Mitterrand's victory is narrow (50.2 per cent) and if Prime Minister Chirac is well ahead of Barre on the first ballot, is a continuation of the current government but with another centrist/right prime minister.

Yet if "*cohabitation*" continued, the stand-off between president and right wing prime minister would become increasingly tense and then (no doubt) break into guerilla warfare — with the Socialist Party in the Assembly acting on Mitterrand's behalf. Mitterrand might reasonably hope that Assembly elections at some point over the next three years would enable a Socialist-dominated coalition to be put together and win. A further possibility is that Mitterrand could manipulate out of the current Assembly a government either including centrists or even one with a centrist prime minister. Numerous names suggest themselves but one outcome could be a split in the UDF (which is in any case itself a coalition) after the general demoralisation of the right caused by presidential defeat. Such a situation would be confused but reminiscent of the Fourth Republic shifting-coalition games at which Mitterrand was adept.

In all these scenarios the position of the party Mitterrand built up will be crucial. Yet the Socialist Party faces internal difficulties which bear directly on the presidential elections. Jospin, who has been leader since 1981, has had enough and wishes to give up the job after the elections. So the fight for succession is on. Jospin, who could hide in a crowd of three, had authority because he was Mitterrand's arm within the party. His successor will not be so pliable. There are two candidates, the ex-prime minister Mauroy, leader of the (well established) Nord Federation, and Laurent Fabius (the other Socialist ex-prime minister). Both are devoted to Mitterrand. Fabius is a moderniser, has presidential ambitions, and could expect to inherit a large part of Mitterrand's support; whereas Mauroy would be a consensual leader soothing squabbles.

A party devoted to Mitterrand, led from the centre and attractive to the floating voter will be vital because the strains on the machinery after the May presidential elections will be intense. Mitterrand could ask an old ally like Pierre Bérégovoy to pull together a Socialist/Centrist coalition in the Assembly. Bérégovoy, who is from a modest background, was finance minister and has re-emphasised the party's commitment to the mixed economy and underlined his pragmatic approach. He is ideally placed. Yet even Bérégovoy will face tough negotiation as well as the abandonment of some cherished projects, while somebody who has the confidence of centrist politicians is needed. Apart from Rocard, there are also rising stars Michel Delebarre (a deputy from the Nord) and Jean-Louis Bianco (currently on Mitterrand's staff), who are much weaker in the party and need greater support.

If the Socialists look badly placed a centrist prime minister could be chosen (there are several possibilities) — *this* government would also need Socialist support. For the party this would be difficult, coming only four years after the Socialist/Communist government, but party activists are realists: if they want to get back into power, and they do, the route lies through some centre combination. In January the party recognised this by drafting a minimal presidential manifesto which gives Mitterrand a very free hand. It is possible, though unlikely, that these unforeseeable events could cause ructions in the Socialist Party, but they will be very testing, which is why the Socialists need a reliable new leader. If a deal with centrists is patched up the Communists will go onto the attack.

Curiously it is from among Barre's supporters (Barre was opposed to any collaboration with Mitterrand in 1986) that the likely centrist prime ministers and ministers will come, and Barre has recently implied that deals after a right wing presidential defeat may be possible.

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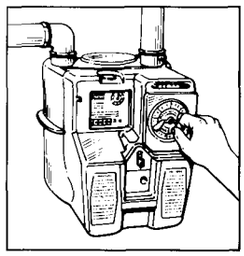

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The Jesse Jackson Uprising

ALEXANDER COCKBURN *acclaims Jackson's breakthrough in the presidential race, celebrates the rout of the* **contra** *in Nicaragua and recalls the truth of an older war*

Los Angeles

THE MORNING AFTER Jesse Jackson had his triumph in Michigan, 27 March, Michael Moore was still asleep in his home in Flint when I called him. He'd been up till five at the victory party and he was still hoarse. Michael's father is a retired auto worker. His uncle was in the famous sit-down strike at Fisher Body in 1936-7. He was first eligible to vote in 1972, when George Wallace won the Michigan primary election with a brand of racist populism that was the uncouth premonition of Ronald Reagan.

"It makes me proud to be from here," Michael said before admitting that, even though he had been helping organise for Jackson round the state, he'd been stunned when they read the caucus numbers in Flint's first ward: Jackson 2,100; Dukakis 67. By the end of the night Jackson had swept Flint 2 to 1 against Dukakis; 3 to 1 in Detroit, big margins in other overwhelmingly white counties elsewhere. In Genesee county, 80 per cent white, Jackson got 63 per cent of the vote.

The Democratic Party in Michigan did its best to contain the Jackson surge. Normally in Flint, Michael told me, there are 90 polling places. That Saturday there were nine. Polling could only take place between ten in the morning and four in the afternoon, when many Flint autoworkers were down in the plants in Pontiac. There were absentee ballots only for Jews and Seventh Day Adventists, so the lock-ins — poor, old, frail and mostly for Jackson — could not vote. Coleman Young, the black mayor of Detroit, endorsed Dukakis. The United Auto Workers had singlehandedly invented the protectionist candidacy of Richard Gephardt and the union was now in no mood to underline its impotence and miscalculation by issuing him a graveside endorsement just before he threw in the towel. Doug Fraser, the union's former president, endorsed Dukakis.

None of it worked. "What it was," Michael said, "was an uprising like the West Bank. Here in Flint we've lost 35,000 General Motors jobs in the last ten years. Multiply that by four to get an idea of the total jobs lost. The official unemployment rate here is 24 per cent, so the real rate is probably nearer 40 per cent, with the rate for blacks at 50 to 60 and over 80 per cent for black youth. You've got crime, drugs, spouse abuse. People are desperate and what they said yesterday was a big 'Fuck You' to the system."

These days campaigning is mostly a matter of landing at airports, catching some local television coverage and then moving on. The quintessentially cool and modern Dukakis and Gore were getting crowds in the low hundreds. Gephardt had a rally in the main street of Flint and stood miserably in the rain as about a hundred people heard him pledge protectionist legislation against Japan and Taiwan. Jackson is hot. When he spoke at the Rouge plant's famous Local 600, or at the Fisher Body plant in Flint, or with Aretha Franklin at his side at the high school in Bloomfield Hills, enclave of the white corporate elite, he had crowds of thousands. And his message was not implicitly racist, like Gephardt's, but explicitly anti-corporate; above all, anti General Motors.

"Are the South Koreans and Taiwanese taking jobs from the US?" Jackson asks workers, as he did the AFL-CIO Texas members gathered in Austin in January. "Let's look at that friends. GM announced that it was closing seven plants and 30,000 jobs last November, then announced 30,000 jobs in Korea the same week. The South Koreans are not taking jobs from us. GM took jobs to them. . ." And then, to show the distance travelled since the Wallace campagn of 1972, Jackson talks about corporate manipulation of the race issue to blind workers to the true nature of their enemy.

Mewling and puking

Michigan made it impossible, once and for all, for the press to dismiss Jackson as a single constituency candidate. In slightly sombre tones David Brinkley announced in his Sunday network show the next day that it now seemed that Jackson could theoretically come to Atlanta and the Democratic Convention with enough delegates to lock up the nomination as presidential candidate. He is already leading Dukakis by a quarter of a million in the popular vote.

All of this naturally has the high brass of the Democratic Party mewling and puking with panic. Henry Waxman, Democratic liberal member of Congress from the west side of Los Angeles, said last week that Jackson "has to be stopped at all costs". But how? The Dukakis campaign is well funded, well managed and now practically submerged under endorsements from perspiring pragmatists. Its ace in the hole is the 645 Democratic "super-delegates", 15 per cent of the 4,162 total, conjured into being by the Democratic National Committee before the 1984 campaign and now enlarged. These are the party grandees, elders and elected office holders, free to support whomever they want at the Convention and designed, in the delicate words of a *Washington Post* reporter, "to act as a kind of independent council of wise men and women, a potential counterbalance to the enthusiasm of direct democracy".

It's silly, right now, to get into smoke-filled-room analysis, of the sort beloved by the political oddsmakers. Not so long ago these oddsmakers were braying about Gephardt and sagaciously advising black people that, in the words of William Shannon in the *Boston Globe*: "A black candidate could be elected in the near future, but he would have to be a candidate with a cool, conservative style and a message that was mainstream and not too threatening to the status quo." This represents the kind of analytic prowess that moved a *Chicago Tribune* writer in the aftermath of Jackson's first big triumphs on 8 March to propose that his white voters are mostly "politically active homosexuals" and the "residue of the radical and counter-culture movements".

Already Jackson has redrawn the road maps to the kind of politics possible this year and beyond. Last week in Texas I travelled through Austin, San Antonio and Houston. A few days earlier, in the second stage of the complicated Texas caucus system that began on 8 March, Jackson had outstripped Dukakis. The people who had organised Jackson movements in the three cities were mostly activists on Central American issues, and they were still somewhat bewilderedly telling each other campaign stories: how they had arrived in the caucus room expecting to be the only Jackson delegate and finding 20 others of the same mind. Many of them are people who began their active political life as part of the movement against the Vietnam war. The mistake the man from the *Chicago Tribune* made was to think of them merely as "residue". As I have tried to explain here before, the progressive strain in American politics has not been dormant these last few years. It is powerful and in Michigan it coalesced with the more primal fires of desperation and rage.

Appointment in Sapoa

Those Central American activists in Texas, like their brothers and sisters across the country, were asking themselves — still are — whether the *contra* war is really over. Two days earlier had come the news of the two-month ceasefire negotiated at Sapoa between the Nicaraguan government and the *contra* leaders. It's true that, as the *contra* Alfredo Cesar coyly let slip, the *contra* are contracting with "a private American company" to airdrop supplies to troops still in the field over the next two months; true too that the Reagan administration yearns for the truce to break down and direct hostilities to recommence; but the *contra* have been routed militarily and, like their sponsor in Washington, outmanoeuvred politically.

The military defeat was being forecast back at Christmas by Sandinista commandantes of the Nicaraguan government's forces. At the time of the *contra* assault on the northeastern mining towns of Siuna and Bonanza one commandante explained to an American visitor that, though the *contra* knew the towns were lightly guarded and threw all their resources into an effort to take and hold them, they had been beaten off within 24 hours. It was their last throw before the Congressional vote on Reagan's military aid package at the start of February. With Reagan's package defeated in the House many *contra* saw the writing on the wall. Already they were unable to find new recruits and were steadily dwindling from their strength of some 6,000.

Throughout the rest of February the Democratic leadership in Congress prepared its own "humanitarian" aid package: food, clothes, communications equipment, planes. House majority leader Jim Wright and his whips implored the liberals to come on board. Some form of *contra* aid, they argued, was inevitable. But in the end, a handful of recalcitrant liberals joined "modera-

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tes" in bucking the compromise. On 3 March, the House rejected the Democratic package. Pending another effort, the *contra* had nothing. The next day they were in the State Department reviewing the situation. Reagan administration officials urged them to keep fighting and shun peace talks with the Sandinistas. Cesar, by one account, rose and said that with the previous day's rejection by Congress he could not in all conscience ask his men to go on fighting. He told Wright that they were prepared to negotiate a ceasefire. Wright, in turn, manoeuvred to prevent any recrudescence of military aid.

Fleeing back to their supply bases on the Bocay, the *contra* were trapped into a battle of position by the Sandinistas. Reagan rushed down the 2,400 men from the 82nd Airborne. On the scenarios of 1984 and 1985 this could have been the starting pistol for invasion. But the political battle had been lost. Polls showed most Americans critical of the dispatch of troops. Despite enormous pressure from Reagan's officials the *contra* kept their appointment in Sapoa.

Rarely in twentieth-century history has so bountifully provisioned and powerfully backed a movement failed so miserably to attract any measure of popular support. The way things are going in the United States, any Democratic candidate may soon be pledging restoration of bilateral ties and economic aid to Nicaragua, seven years and some 40,000 casualties after the infant Reagan administration gave the Argentinian junta $50 million to send its most seasoned torturers north to Honduras to train a Nicaraguan *contra* force.

He did not stand idly by

The trench filled with 583 bodies — Vietnamese men, women and children systematically killed by soldiers in Charlie Company over a number of hours starting at 7.30 am, 16 March 1968, recorded later that day by US army photographer Ron Haeberle — has not figured much this year in retrospectives of the 1960s. And in fact, set against the backdrop of the maniacal B-52 bombings in the South and the free-fire clearances conducted by the United States through 1968 and 1969, My Lai was nothing special in the way of war crimes. In Operation Speedy Express, the pacification of Kien Hoa at the end of 1968, some 5,000 non-combatants were estimated to have been slaughtered.

"Jackson has redrawn the road maps to the kind of politics possible this year and beyond . . . The progressive strain in American politics coalesced in Michigan with desperation and rage"

The man who made this estimate was Kevin Buckley, Saigon bureau chief of *Newsweek* who studied the operation closely. He told me last week that analysis by the US Army in Saigon even deduced a Peak Killing Hour, or PKH, when maximum slaughter could most efficiently be achieved. It was the time when residents were going home from work. The United States did not just threaten to bomb Vietnam back to the Stone Age; it went right ahead and did so. But My Lai became the war crime of choice, and its ultimate exposure in the United States was due entirely to the courage of one man, Ron Ridenhour.

These days Ridenhour is a reporter in New Orleans, investigating civic graft of the sort that luxuriates in Louisiana. Back in March of 1967 he was 20, living in Arizona and had just been drafted. He was shipped to Hawaii in September and trained in long-distance reconnaissance with men who ended up being assigned to Charlie Company, under the command of Lieutenant William "Rusty" Calley.

"Right after My Lai," Ridenhour recalled for me two weeks ago, "a lot of these guys in Charlie Company started to transfer back into long-range reconnaissance. The first guy I ran into, I said, 'Hey, what have you guys been doing?' And they said, 'Oh man, did you hear what we did at Pinkville.'

"I said 'No, what's Pinkville?' It was a village; that's what they called My Lai at that time. He tells me this story about how they went in and massacred all those people. When I heard that I was horrified; my response was pretty much instantaneous. I wanted to get away from it, and I thought the only way I could do that, get away from it, not be part of it, would be to discover whether it was true, and if it was true, to denounce it. To act against it in some way."

Over the next few months, often in the appallingly dangerous circumstances of long range reconnaissance, Ridenhour winkled out details of the massacre from veterans of Charlie Company. He wrote nothing down, for some might easily have killed him if they had known what he was about. Others pledged to tell the truth if an investigation ever got started. Back in the United States and out of the army at the start of 1969, Ridenhour wrote a long report on the massacre, made 200 copies and, as a start, on 29 March 1969, sent out 30. One of them was to his local member of Congress, Mo Udall. Udall circulated the letter to some of his congressional colleagues and pushed the Pentagon to investigate. By 30 April the Pentagon had begun a probe and was soon talking to Ridenhour. "Then," Ridenhour remembers, "they called me and said they had arrested Calley. I waited to see what would happen and then, when no one else was arrested, I knew what they were going to do. They were going to flush Calley, claim this was the act of a wild man and let it go."

At this point Ridenhour began to alert the press. In the end a former Associated Press reporter called Seymour Hersh came out to Arizona to interview him and soon details of My Lai (which the Vietnamese National Liberation Front had reported as soon as it happened) were all over the American papers and television screens. But the cover-up did work to an extent. Calley was the fall guy. "The important thing is," Ridenhour says, "that this was an act of policy, not an individual aberration. Above My Lai were helicopters filled with the entire command staff of the brigade, division and task force. It takes a long time to kill almost 600 people. These guys were flying overhead from 7.30 in the morning, when the unit first landed and began to move into those hamlets. I think the command staff didn't get there till 9 am. They were there at least two hours, at 500 feet, 1,000 feet and 1,500 feet. This was an act of policy." Did Americans learn anything from My Lai? Ridenhour asked himself and then answered: "A lot of Americans learned, a lot of middle-class people learned, 'Gosh, these guys will do anything'. I learned that. The motherfuckers will do anything. There really are no limits."

Sometimes people ask in a puzzled way why bits of the antiwar movement in the US freaked out in the late 1960s and demonstrated what one could call certain pathological symptoms. I remember reading about "accelerated pacification", saturation bombing, strafing, slaughter, day after day after day. It was hard not to freak out. As the man sings: "If I had a rocket launcher, I'd make somebody pay." My Lai remains a symbol, just an intimation of what happened in that destroyed land where they made a desert and had the effrontery to call it defeat, thus requiring that "honor" be retrieved and "resolve" be demonstrated on battlefields elsewhere. □

The experience of Vietnam still haunts America and its film industry. Above: scene from *Platoon* (1986)

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ESSAY

Looking for the real thing

Does it really matter what sex a novelist happens to be — or what colour? Doesn't the authority of fiction derive from something beyond its author's personal experience? Remembering the case of Virago and the Vicar,* ROSALIND COWARD *teases out some answers to these difficult questions

AS FAR AS the literary establishment and the popular press were concerned, the case of the upstart vicar and the feminist publishing house was the best laugh of 1987.

For the literary establishment, the revelation that Rahila Khan's *Down the Road Worlds Away* was in fact written by the Rev. Toby Forward was a glorious humiliation of political publishing and a triumph of the timeless literary values. As far as the popular press was concerned, it was about the punishment of a bunch of intolerant haridans. Even a vicar who supported CND, the Labour Party, *and* took an active interest in multi-cultural education (usually a prime target to be hounded himself) was to be congratulated for pulling a fast one on the harpies.

In the eyes of most feminists, Virago acted very properly in withdrawing copies of the book when the Rev. Toby Forward revealed his true identity three weeks after publication. But, in spite of outrage at the grossness of the press reaction, it was difficult not to wonder how the deception had gone so far. Had there been an overhasty enthusiasm to publish an Asian woman? Or did the effectiveness of the vicar's deception in fact undermine one of the fundamental beliefs of feminist publishing: that it is necessary to publish the authentic voice of "minorities". If a white vicar could write women's fiction just as well as a woman, perhaps feminism has somehow been wrong in asserting that it was important for women themselves to speak their experiences, rather than relying on white male fantasies of what we might think or feel.

The establishment, both philistine and literary, celebrated the vicar's deception as the definitive proof of the wrongheadedness of this attempt to import politics into literature. "Feminists do themselves a disservice" was one headline; "Feminists get it wrong . . . again" another. Such public hostility should come as no surprise. Virago might sometimes look like part of the literary establishment to feminists but, to the outside world, the priorities of feminist publishing still smack of the much dreaded separatism. As Lennie Goodings from Virago put it, "Our main aims are to celebrate and illuminate all aspects of all women's lives, to demonstrate a tradition of women's writing and to uncover the hidden voices of women — to publish the stories and thoughts of women who haven't had a voice in literature before." Virago has, in fact, occasionally deliberately published men — albeit mainly dead ones — whereas the Women's Press, Pandora and Sheba explicitly avoid so doing.

Indeed Sheba was once similarly tricked into publishing a short story by a man; it has subsequently made it policy always to deal directly with the author. All the feminist publishers have a spoken commitment to feminist politics, although this has produced different emphases in the different publishers. The Women's Press is known for its new fiction, Sheba for lesbian and black writing. The image of Virago is more literary, deriving from its early successes with reprints. Partly because of the urgency of questions of race within feminism, and partly because there is a very definite market for black writing, almost all of the feminist publishers have made "anti-racism" one of their important goals.

Talent has a sex

The one aim shared by all feminist publishers — to redress the massive historical imbalances by which white men have dominated publishing and literary values — is complete anathema to the literary establishment. Overtly, at least, the establishment believes that it publishes "talent", not persons with identifiable gender and race. Reminders that authors have radically different social positions and opportunities are taken as tasteless irrelevancies in the transcendent world of art. "Separatist" publishing is seen as conferring unfair advantages on individuals who ought to be able to achieve "on their own merit". Indeed, one of the most striking aspects of the Rahila Khan case is precisely the way in which the vicar was morally "pardoned" by the press who turned him into a member of the new oppressed — white men — who miss out on all the perks which blacks and women have. Endless reference to George Eliot made it clear that any cultural promotion of women and ethnic minorities is seen as discrimination against white men. It is an extraordinary and hostile fantasy, which spreads across all media and indeed politics, completely denying the disadvantages under which women and ethnic minorities live in this country, including the massive disadvantage of always being explained, represented and analysed by a white male majority.

It is unlikely that anyone within feminism would deny that literature is, among other things, about the ability to enter imaginatively into other people's lives. Feminist criticism and feminist publishing, however, have made it clear that for too long white men have dominated that imaginative activity and denied other groups the right to their version of reality. Feminist critics have argued that there is often something distinctive about women's version of reality, something which has been most clearly visible in the treatment of sexuality. It took feminists to point out that D.H. Lawrence's view of sexuality, as in Lady Chatterley's masochistic lust for the avenging phallus, said more about male fantasies of women's desire than anything else. And, the more women wrote, the more it became clear that women had different things to say — indeed, they wanted to include subjects which adherents to the idea of great literature would hardly consider fit: the drudgery of women's domestic life, menstruation, childbirth. . . .

This is not to say that the idea of women's writing is without problems. Some feminist critics claim that all women writers, even in periods long predating feminism, can be said to demonstrate distinctive female concerns: concerns with the body, sublimated sexuality and domestic oppression. Yet it is hard to defend the idea that the gender of the author *always* produces this "feminine" writing; even harder to suggest that the values expressed by women writers put them in conflict with contemporary masculine or patriarchal values.

The fact of being a woman or black does not necessarily produce progressive writing or politics. Yet, within contemporary politics, it seems important that women and black women should have the space in which to formulate their own distinctive priorities against the grain of dominant cultural values. Because of this uneasy relation between the politics of the text and the identity of the writer, there are many feminists who would prefer feminist publishing to promote a feminist *perspective*, and a black perspective, rather than simply promoting women, or black women, writers.

Within feminist publishing, this distinction is sometimes a precarious one; the Rahila Khan saga has made us painfully aware that there can sometimes be a lack of clarity about what constitutes women's writing, or black women's writing. The establishment could glory in mistakes of a politics based on the identity of a writer since feminism could be so easily tricked. And Toby Forward himself joined league with literary conservatism to pronounce that "Rahila Khan" was merely a disguise, a freedom from his identity as a priest. "The pseudonyms are creative and dynamic, and the fuss and bother about feminism and racism and Rahila Kahn is really only a side issue." But if feminism and racism were a side issue for Toby Forward and the British press, for feminist criticism they remain the central questions. Had a white man really managed to write a collection of stories with a black women's perspective?

Virago's own stance on this aspect of the affair was unclear. Not surprisingly they stood by the intrinsic "quality" of Rahila Khan's book, but declared themselves "distressed that this attempt to represent the Asian community should transpire to be a cruel hoax". Defending their own judgment, they appeared to accept that a white man had successfully imagined the lives of Asian

"It took feminists to point out that D.H. Lawrence's view of sexuality, as in Lady Chatterley's masochistic lust for the avenging phallus, said more about male fantasies of women's desire than anything else"

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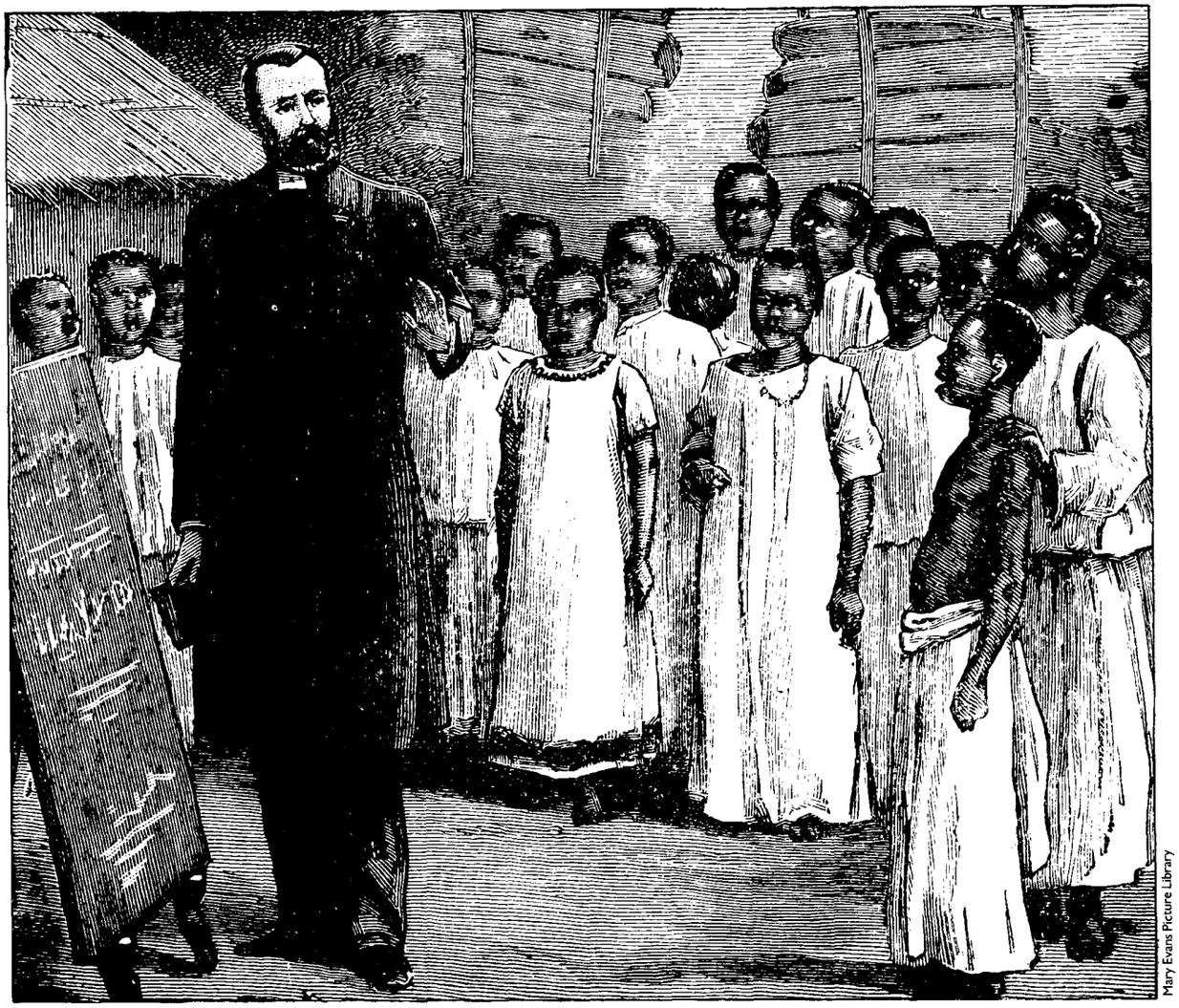

Mary Evans Picture Library

Ancestor of the Rev. Toby Forward puts words into black people's mouths

women and given voice to the Asian experience in Britain. However, they expressed outrage on behalf of Asian readers that they had been denied an authentic voice. Yet many of the Asian writers to whom I spoke about this affair felt that in some, extremely complex, ways the vicar's deception had been effective because of flaws and weaknesses in attitudes prevalent among publishers towards writers from ethnic minorities.

There can be little doubt that Virago was quite wilfully misled and indeed exploited. The Rev. Toby Forward exploited a prevailing stereotype of Asian women by appeals to Virago to respect her/his privacy. In a letter of February last year he wrote to Virago, making implicit appeals to a guilty liberalism. "I am anxious . . . that you are having second thoughts about going ahead. I hope not as I have now stopped negotiating the collection with the Women's Press, not least because you were able to respect my personal reasons for not being able to deal with you directly." At some point he was also able to persuade the Women's Press to respect his personal reasons since it, too, published one of Rahila Khan's short stories at almost exactly the same time as Virago's collection appeared (but intends to leave the story out of the collection in any future re-print).

An attractive proposition

When the book was submitted to Virago, it must have appeared a very attractive proposition. It was a collection of short stories about young people of different races in conflict with society. The format, with alternating stories of Asian girls and white boys, would be enormously interesting for exploring the gulf between gender and cultures as seen by an Asian woman. The stories themselves appeared to be written with great sensitivity to the dilemmas of adolescents in a divided world. One can quite understand how attractive the book would appear, exploring as it does the whole question of *difference* in the supposedly shared world of adolescence. Virago apparently had its impressions confirmed by an outside reader, an Asian woman whom it described as being enthusiastic about the book because it tackled head on some of the problems in the Asian community.

However, reading the book as I did, with the advantages of hindsight, its feminism and its anti-racism did seem questionable. There is, for example, the curious way in which the chapters about white boys have a much richer use of language. All the stories about the white boys are written in the first person, whereas almost all the Asian girls' stories are in the third person, a fact which one of the Virago editors questioned during production, receiving the answer, "Some stories seem to require a narrator's involvement while others benefit from a cooler approach." But the form of narration is only one difference in the language; the writing for the boys' stories is far more dynamic and lively, encompassing much wider experiences. The Asian girls' stories are not only largely narrated in the third person but the girls are often in secondary and passive roles, as in "Angel", where the central focus of the story is the brother's violent conflict with his parents.

Most striking is the contrast between the complexity in the boys' relationships and the lack of subtlety and complexity in the girls'. All the girls inhabit a world with a very limited set of relationships, a world where "Western" values bring them into inevitable conflict with repressive and traditionalist parents. The ways in which the death of a parent is dealt with for the white boys and Asian girls is exemplary of the difference in treatment. The stories "Mum" and "Furnace" deal with a white adolescent boy's relationship with his mother dying of cancer. Both stories focus on adolescent pranks where the boys' actions, although apparently cruel and callous, are explored in their full complexity. The story "Taking Care", however, which deals with the death of the father of an Asian girl, has considerably less subtlety. When the father dies, the care she has given her father is reciprocated, not by any complex obligations within the community but by an unwelcome arranged marriage.

Ravindher Randhawa, whose novel *A Wicked Old Woman* (Women's Press) has just been published, described the stories as repeating the tired and worn out stereotype of Asian families as dominated by religion and tradition, and the relationships between Asian girls and their parents as one of conflict over these values, especially around the point of sexuality. It is interesting to know that Ravindher Randhawa, when she read the short story "Winter's Wind" from the Women's Press collection, before the vicar was exposed, felt worried about its inclusion in the collection. She discussed it with a teacher friend and they concluded that "it was gift for a white teacher" since it confirmed all sorts of prejudices about Asian families. She decided that the story must have been written by a very young writer and that it was not her place to be discouraging. In hindsight, however, many of the stories in the Virago collection appear to bear out these criti-

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cisms. There is a distinct way in which Asian culture is presented as the problem, primarily through the restraints it puts on the girls' sexuality. And there is the distinctly odd way in which Christianity and Western education feature in the book as flawed, but seductive, belief systems.

It could be said that the criticisms have been made in hindsight, only proving the problems in trying to read a novel by reference to the social identity of the author. I have tried to think honestly about how I would have read the book believing in Rahila Khan, and have concluded, with no credit to myself, that I probably would have found the book unevenly accomplished and accepted unthinkingly the stereotype of Asian families. And it is certainly important to realise how much significance all of us attribute to the author of a text, when a novel can vacillate between being a valuable contribution to the portrayal of the Asian community and a problematic liberal racist text, depending on who we think wrote it. But the case against minority publishers does not rest there. Although a feminist, I am also just another white critic and, if nothing else, this event has brought home to me that it would be arrogant to assume I have the necessary skills to recognise what is an authentic black perspective.

There is another fact of importance in this saga. Not all the criticisms of Rahila Khan's book were raised in hindsight. Yasmin Alibhai, editor of the Race section of *New Society*, expressed doubts about the book when Virago sent her an advance copy. She told Virago that she didn't wish to review the book because she suspected that it was not written by an Asian woman. Later, she described her reaction as initially intuitive but relating, among other things, to a sense of paternalistic white values prevailing in the stories. Now, it is pretty unusual for a reviewer to suspect a hoax and that something made Yasmin Alibhai suspicious should give us pause for thought. For one thing it suggests that a critic sensitively alerted to the political questions might well have a clear sense of a black perspective in writing in which the well-intentioned liberalism of a white vicar just will not do. For another thing, the incident raises questions about the process of publishing the book. It's clear from Virago's correspondence with the vicar that the editors were quite anxious about the author's persistent refusal to deal directly with them. How was it that this hint of suspicion from publicity did not feed its way back into the system and suggest a late review of the book, and perhaps a wider consultation with an Asian readership?

None of this is to blame Virago. Theirs was an all too understandable mistake and a great shame given that, like the other feminist publishers, Virago has made a real commitment to promoting black writing. But it points up some of the problems in the anti-racist, or multi-cultural, policies pursued by many of the predominantly white publishing houses. Almost all the Asian writers I spoke to expressed some reservations about the way in which leftist and feminist publishers treated writing by ethnic minorities. There was a general sense that, although interest in black writing is growing and feminist publishers were conscious and active around the problem of the exclusion of blacks from publishing, there were still insufficient attempts to integrate black criticism into their editorial judgments. If feminist and anti-racist politics have led publishers to foreground "experience" in order to hear the voices of groups who have not been able to speak previously, then there is a problem in relying, largely, on the rather limited experiences of white women, however well intentioned, to mediate those experiences. Perhaps none of the publishers use sufficient care to elicit black critical judgment or to change the power structures of the companies so that a black perspective is routinely part of editorial judgments.

Paradoxically, the literary establishment is right when it states that the author should not be all-important in the reading of a text. It's a paradox because I don't mean this in the same way as conventional literary critics. In attacking feminist publishing for attaching too much importance to the real social indentity of the author, conventional critics in fact wish to re-instate "the author" as the Holy Grail of a text, explaining the "greatness" of a book by reference to the author as a transcendent imagination — above race, class and gender. And feminist publishing has been vital in exposing this as a racist and sexist mythology, masking the oppressive claims of white males to represent all of humanity.

Yet perhaps feminist publishing has also been infected by notions of authorship as the ultimate explanation for what is in a text. They have exchanged conventional criticism's ideas of "intuition", "genius" and "imagination" for "authenticity" and "experience", endangering a more political interpretation of writing. And, if this has happened, then the very least to be expected is that white feminists should be prepared to recognise the limits to our own experience, knowledge and judgments. □

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Books

Rowlandson's "The Jugglers" (that's what it says) from Peter Wagner's *Eros Revised*

With the lights off

Sex, since the Enlightenment, has constantly been probed, turned over and classified. Three new volumes on 18th-century "unauthorised" sexuality leave **LUCA FONTANA** *wondering whether it wasn't better off in the shadows*

I SUSPECT a secret ambition underlying the whole enterprise of Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité*: to silence for good the discourse on sex, the all-intrusive *savoir pouvoir*, knowledge through power, which started with the torch-bearers of the Enlightenment and led to the floodlights of social policing which now search out every corner of this last path of individual quest. Death has instead silenced Michel Foucault. And his arguments, which aimed at dissolving the rigid mapping out of human erotic life and gender identification, have instead given rise to a spate of doctoral dissertations and whole new fields of historical research.

'Tis Nature's Fault (ed. Robert Purks Maccubin, Cambridge, £25 & £8.95), though a collection of academic writings from France, Britain and America, could be recommended even to the interested layman as a good introduction to the present state of historical research into the newly trodden territories of "unauthorised sexualities" and their associated underworlds. The general panorama that emerges from these essays on specific fields of research, in spite of some open dissent with Foucault's assumptions, seems to confirm most of what he had anticipated theoretically. The 18th century first identifies and names the sexual thing as separate; human sexuality becomes the much-trafficked junction between three competing paradigms of understanding and control: the theological-moral, the medical (proto-psychiatric) and the hedonistic, the last two voicing the need for a new, secularised concept of virtue. Emancipation and repression go hand in hand: it is the stammering paramedical science of this century that creates the "onanistic scare". "*Sodomie, pederastie, buggery, unnatural vices* start being looked into and newly categorised, leading to the type-casting of homosexualities familiar to us today. Only a truly radical thinker like Diderot (as shown in an absorbing analysis of his philosophical dialogue, "*La suite d l'entretien*" by a scholar of French upbringing, Théodore Tarczylo) shows some justified wariness at the new medical *savoir* and tries to put it in dialectical clash with a hedonistic morality and a total relativistic approach to gender. In a previous *dialogue à trois, "La Rêve de D'Alembert"*, between himself, Docteur Bordeu and Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, he even has his medical man muse whether "man is perhaps but woman's monster, or woman man's monster".

The very newest field of historical research is homosexual history: "a history that has just begun to be written," as Randolph Trumbach states in a comprehensive review of the recent approaches. These range from social history (Anglo-Saxon in spirit and with a quantitative leaning) through *histoire des mentalités* to a new approach to literary records: *Sodomitical Sub-cultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution of the Eighteenth Century: the Recent Historiography*. The relevance of literary sources for homosexual history is illustrated by G. S.Rousseau in a survey of 18th-century literature from an entirely new and revealing perspective: *The Pursuit of Homosexuality in the Eighteenth Century: Utterly Confused Category and/or Rich Repository*. A broad distinction to be made between the scholars and schools here represented is that while, to the social historian of English background, homosexuality and homosexual sub-cultures in the 18th century appear as an easily identifiable object, to French or Franco-American cultural historians it appears as much more problematic to spot and fence out conceptually. The latter tend to agree with Foucault: it is an "utterly confused category".

Many of these general remarks apply to **Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment** (Manchester, £29.50), another collection of essays, this time edited by G. S. Rousseau and Roy Porter. Both in Rousseau's earlier book and in this one, women's sexuality, orthodox and heterodox, is scantily represented. All the historian can attempt to reconstruct is the male imagery of it, mainly because, as stated by the two editors in the introduction (presumably written before Virago

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published *The Diaries of Anne Lister*), "No full non-fictional female diary recording of sexual experience seems to survive at all." No Lady Casanova, therefore. Furthermore, in patriarchal societies, female homosexuality is even considered (one could see an advantage in it) below the law, hence the scarcity of archival sources. From a merely male perspective, women's sexuality shrinks to prostitution and child-bearing. A really enlightening essay by Paul Gabriel Boucé (*Imagination, Pregnant Women, and Monsters, in Eighteenth Century England and France*) explores the male belief that sexual fantasizing in pregnant women can cause monstrosities in the new-born.

Once again, as in '*Tis Nature's Fault*, G. S. Rousseau's new insight into literary sources appears to me as the most fruitful kind of research. His essay on *The Sorrows of Priapus* traces a subtle landscape with figures of "homosexual desire and Englishmen abroad". It is a revealing exploration on the rise of competing tastes and styles such as neo-classicism and neo-gothic, both so inextricably entangled with British homosocial, homoerotic and homosexual obsessions.

It would be too heavy for the ordinary, decent woman that she is, but **Eros Revived: Erotica of the Enlightenment in England and America** (Secker, £30) would otherwise be the ideal Christmas gift for Mary Whitehouse. This massive tome by the German-born, French-educated historian Peter Wagner is a minute, even pedantic, but digestibly written research on "bawdy, obscene, erotic and pornographic works, including scatological humour and satire". An excess of systematic organisation betrays its origin as a doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne. The author identifies three sources of the pornographic imagination in the 18th century: medical, or pseudo-medical discourse; the attack on Christianity; socio-political protest. In my opinion, the last two uses are worth reviving. A rich choice of illustrations makes this book as vulnerable as any to Clause 29.

Since the Enlightenment, the pendulum seems to have swung right back. Bigots of all sorts — especially in Britain, allow me to say (I come from "the torrid zone of Italy/Where blood ferments in Rape and Sodomy", as witnessed by Daniel Defoe) — are again pushing Bibles and constrictive moralities on us. I would suggest to my fellow sexual heretics to resist the temptation to answer back either in and with outrage (resist André Breton's war cry: "Children, scandalise your parents: show it to them!"). Let the bigots triumph; let them shut up any discourse on sex for a couple of centuries. Grazing along the dark edges of life is not such a bad thing, provided they leave us alone. All prophylactic measures taken, there can be fun in it. □

Not so fine young cannibals

Amy Gamerman

Captivity Captive
RODNEY HALL *Faber* £10.95

BOXING NIGHT, 1898. In Cuttajo, New South Wales, two sisters and their brother drive back from a Christmas dance. The next day their bodies are found in a paddock, heads crushed, wrists and ankles bound, their feet pointing west. The murderer is never found, the motive never unravelled. Rodney Hall borrows this "unsolved mystery" (which actually took place in Queensland) to explore the deeper and more intricate mysteries of family love.

The Murphy clan inhabit a grim, lowslung farmstead called Paradise, ruled over by Pa, who "stood six feet ten inches in his socks and weighed twenty-six stone of graceless strength" and regularly beats his sons unconscious. Mum, "a giant too, with bones on a big scale overlaid by hard fat", is most at home in her larder among the "shelves of dead meat, dried fruit, crushed seeds". These leviathans loom over their ten children, smashing any attempt at independence or rebellion. The children dream of escape but are helpless to leave, too absorbed in one another, "playing the games we did". In this novel the "ties that bind" are literal, as Pa chains eldest son Michael to his bed at night "just to keep him from behaving wildly". The ministering angel in this Paradise is eldest sister Norah, who "kept us human, undoing all the work he and Mum put in to have us beasts for life". The story is told through the recollections of middle son, Pat, who acts as family historian and apologist. The murders, evoked repeatedly throughout the novel as it weaves erratically through time, reveal that the ties that bind are also those of complicity.

This is a poet's novel, with its images of blood rites, incest and death. The Murphy's paradise is a testament to a family's power to enact its own laws and to exact its own form of retribution. Even original sin is homegrown. But the Murphys are the victims of their size and strength, and family closeness becomes a kind of cannibalism. At the family dinner table:

> Even while we bowed our heads at the big table for Pa to say grace, the floor squirmed with lascivious snufflings and nips, the brush of a sprung flesh tail against your bare leg, the odour of insatiability and the wild confusion of an equality in splendour. The respectability of beasts devouring a beast above the board floated thick as oil on the pandemonium of what was being stifled below.

If dense and indigestible, the novel is still absorbing. The heavy overlay of words and images, the rebounding sentences, fulfil the title's claustrophobic promise. Although that may well be Hall's intent, his giant characters seem cramped within this elegantly bound, rather slim novel; it's an epic in a teacup. □

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

The Index to Vol. 114 is now available, price £2.50 (incl. p&p). Send remittance to **New Statesman (Index), Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ.**

Very much afraid of Virginia Woolf

Jenny Turner

No Man's Land, Vol.1: The War of the Words
SANDRA M. GILBERT and SUSAN GUBAR *Yale* £12.95

HITTING LONDON in 1908, Ezra Pound looked forward to a career of ramming imagism's "phallic direction" right into the city's "great passive vulva".

His good friend William Carlos William's long poem "Paterson" was padded out and/or enriched with letters quoted verbatim, without permission, from Marcia Nardi, an ex-lover and herself a fine but struggling poet. These letters refer hysterically to private matters and to Williams' "complete damning of my creative capacities".

Today Pound, and even more Williams, are still looked up to for pointing ways away from Eliot-type mystification and into the concrete, into spoken language, poetry as industry, as technic, as Tool. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar see this as part of a great masculinist war effort to colonise the flourishing "mother tongues" of modern vernacular culture and so keep *patrio sermo* — the word of the father — in the style to which it is accustomed. Once said, so obvious.

Gilbert and Gubar's last collaboration was *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), which explored patterns of "enclosure and escape, maddened doubles as asocial surrogates for docile selves, metaphors of discomfort . . . along with obsessive depictions of diseases like anorexia, agoraphobia and claustrophobia" in the works of the famous woman writing in 19th century England and North America. This one undertakes the enormous task of working out how feminities fit in to the Anglo-American canon of literary modernism.

The thesis is basically that the grinding liturgies of decline and renewal which gave Pound, Williams, Joyce such creative energy were set going by men anxious at seeing women flooding the public sphere. The damned muse won't sit still and then she starts answering back.

Strategies for coping with this monstrous dispossession were varied but never accommodationist. It is easy to read this book as a bestiary of peevish "no-men" and the stupid sexpots-stroke-omphalosses of all evil they constructed, as codpieces, for protection and glorification of their own. On the one side we have Fisher King, Leopold Bloom, a poet with "dugs" on like Eliot's Tiresias. On the other, tidily seeping orifice piles like Molly Bloom, or liberated evil blue meanies like Lawrence's Gudrun (who, you may recall, liked killing rabbits).

This strand of the argument is given resonance by Gilbert and Gubar's interest in and development of Harold Bloom (US literary critic; no relation of Molly)'s 1973 allegory of poetic misprision. Blooms' "anxiety of influence" reads "strong poets" as locked in primal struggle with their literary pre-cursors for the right to bear the father's word. In tone it is very Adam and God on the Sistine Chapel roof. But the irony of its stature next to little modern men beetling about does add a

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ring to, say, Lawrence's hideous atavism or Eliot's attempts to wrest a great tradition back for himself.

We will have to wait for volumes two and three of this study to see fully how feminine works transform the myth. In the meantime, Gilbert and Gubar's run some data on how women responded to the great cosmic slagging match and offer what is, however psychoanalytically suspect, a virtuoso reading of Virginia Woolf's critical essays. Long before she was a novelist, Woolf worked hard as the first serious researcher and chronicler of the female tradition from which she wanted to come. Gilbert and Gubar suggest she was also remarkable in being about the first woman writer decisively to overcome a masculinity complex. She was modern enough, and courageous enough, to need no male trappings, no pseudonym, no George Sand suit, no Gertrude Stein gruffness to write. But, no matter what Adrienne Rich says, this wasn't easy or unambivalent.

The writer confronting her possible foremothers is beside herself with anxiety and envy. She is guilty to know their pain yet glories in it. She wants to whisk their mantles from them yet wants to give them her own, yet secretly fears neither can be as good as a man's.

This dimension to Woolf's investigations can be seen in a 1924 essay called "Indiscretions: 'Never Seek To Tell Thy Love, Love That Never Told Can Be' — But One's feelings for Some Writers Outrun All Prudence". The author-to-be is tiptoeing up on a harem, we "tremble slightly as we approach the curtain and catch glimpses of women behind it and even hear ripples of laughter . . ." The voyeurism expresses the daughter's distance from past writers, her entanglement, her desire to rip the veil that can't be ripped. I wonder how Woolf would feel if she could see today's identically structured invocations of the dead, if she could read the countless poems and essays apostrophising her as adopted mother, or view her imagined genitalia served up for devotion at Judy Chicago's *Dinner Party*.

The War of the Words is very Ivy League in its length (another two volumes to go: the promise of infinite bequests), in its combination of clever close readings with voluminous research done by research assistants, in being all tied up in an alfresco allegorical bow at the expense of socio-historical realism. There is little sense of real social worlds, of the textures of public and private lives, of how public spheres develop not as concepts but institutions.

The modern movement was made up of little magazines, bigger ones, revolutions in ways of understanding sexuality, class, work, the world, the travel and communications industries, so many factors. So drawn onto the plane of myth, the authors miss distinctions between public and private words, conscious propaganda and the dynamic works — never as schematic as they'd like to think — of the unconscious in jokes, slips, dreams and artworks. They don't discuss the coming of feminism as a political option and, therefore, the fact that many women — Isak Dinesen, for example — consciously opted to be anti-feminist. Such details may not alter the basic structures much, but they enrich the ways we see women — and men — in their social and literary existences. □

PAPERBACKS

Tanks for the memory

WHEN THOMAS PYNCHON re-issued some of his early stories in *Slow Learner*, aficionados guessed that "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" was not the only absentee. So the publishing event of the week must be the three as yet unknown novellas from the 1960s collected in **Cold Obstruction** (Black Skunk Press, Santa Monica; $17.95).

Pynchon thought of himself as a bad apprentice and a late developer. The title of *Cold Obstruction* reflects the dead weight of language and belief that the fledgling writer had to overcome. His protagonists share this sense of creativity baffled by an entropic and illegible universe sliding towards the destruction that its own rudderless systems of knowledge and power portend. In "Pendant Worlds" the death of Marilyn Monroe and the Cuban missile crisis fuse into a twin crisis of meaning for Nietzsche-reading naval rating Eberhardt Klingsor. In "Sensible Warm Motion" Pynchon's dope-smoking biochemist Danny Divine finds, in the be-bop rhythms heard in a Greenwich Village dive, a vital clue to the double-helical structure of the DNA molecule. Finally, in "The Viewless Winds", a plot hatched by Bertrand Russell and British Intelligence over a primitive wireless transmitter launches the Russian Revolution as a test of Russell's theory of logical types ("a class cannot be a member of itself").

As *glasnost* unfolds, much of the authentic flavour of the Kremlin's *ancien régime* may disappear for ever. So it was a bright and timely idea to invite British style-watchers to comment on much-loved aspects of Soviet popular culture in **Apparat Chic** (Paladin, £5.95). Stephen Bayley drools over the styling of the Zil limousine ("the ghost of a tank; the distant echo of a haycart"). Peter York unravels the signals sent by the hats of Party officials ("a coded homage to Stalin by way of a sartorial nod to his cinematic counterparts, Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney"). After Robert Elms reports from an unauthorised club where the cult band Prince Mishkin and the Narodniks play soulful covers of Status Quo numbers, Julie Burchill rounds off this uneven but punchy miscellany with a celebration of the folk wisdom that underpins the routines of the Red Army dance ensemble.

With **Capital Repayments** (Methuen, £4.95) thriller writer Jen de Soto pushes back the frontiers of the genre even further. Her wise-cracking sleuth Mo Verity practises as a Kleinian analyst when not playing the marimba in a salsa band. As she drafts a paper *contra* Lacan one quiet night in Camberwell, a traumatised client slumps on to the doorstep. Evidence soon comes to light of a conspiracy by estate agents and psychotherapists to undermine the future leadership of the left by a combined strategy of gazumping and hostile interpretations. The trail leads back to a BOSS-funded Freudian developer cornered at last during a climactic stake-out in a Clissold Park maisonette. All ends happily as Mo sets up a guilt-free property bureau to liberate new social movements who were born free but are everywhere in chains.

After the first rush of 1968 commemorations comes the long-awaited autobiography of Parisian impresario Zacharie Orfèvre, **Selling Out** (Faber, £9.95). For the first time, he discloses his crucial part in the events of the miraculous year and its aftermath. We already knew that he held exclusive worldwide media rights to the second Grosvenor Square demonstration ("only a remake could get the camera-angles right"). Here, we learn of the Left Bank studio where graffiti were patented: the creator of "*Sous les pavés, la plage*" now works for Club Mediterranée.

In the '70s he hired redundant Situationists to generate punk and then pass it off as street-smart rebellion. He currently scours the Deep South in search of aged and infirm jazz musicians. Washboard virtuoso Fats McCabe is only the latest Orfèvre *artiste* to star in a Budweiser commercial. In this chastening work the clever hopes expire of a low dishonest decade. Fallen idols stand exposed as plagiarists and fixers. Serialisation rights have been sold to the *Mail on Sunday*.

In their health-conscious coffee-table book **Safe Sex in the English Country House** (Thames & Hudson, £15.00), Mark Girouard and Alex Comfort reveal the secrets of distinguished hosts and guests of the Edwardian and inter-war eras. Backed by lavish colour illustrations, the authors argue that an artistic elite pioneered non-invasive forms of intimacy that carried no discernible risk. These included discussing Roger Fry, painting Edith Sitwell and the cultivation of old varieties of tea-rose. Fans will be grateful for the bedroom-plans of Garsington and Sissinghurst. Appendices cover the little-known lingerie designs of Morris and Co.

Last, and a long way downmarket, comes **Folding Stuff** by Corinna Curll (NEL, £3.95). "An epic blockbuster romp in the great tradition of Malcolm Bradbury and Sally Beauman," pants the blurb. Alas, this ludicrous tale of lust and greed among London publishers overflows with people and actions that would strain the most gormless reader's credulity. Hopeless drunks shamble from one disaster to the next; high-minded radicals blunder on quite innocent of the laws of arithmetic, let alone economics; caricature Austro-Hungarians hold cabinet ministers in the palm of their hand; a Kurdish tycoon bothers women with a tape-recorder and diversifies into perfumes called *Pendant La Jouissance*. Most unlikely of all, a Transylvanian peasant rises inexorably until he gains a stranglehold on the whole craven and mercenary bunch. At the end of this farrago, you just feel grateful that not one of this fanciful batch of creeps and charlatans could ever exist in the real world. . .

Boyd Tonkin

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Left newspaper right off course

Nigel Fountain

Disaster! The Rise and Fall of News on Sunday
PETER CHIPPINDALE and CHRIS HORRIE
Sphere £3.99

IN THEIR INTRODUCTION Chippindale and Horrie note the many "it wasn't my fault" pieces that have appeared since the demise of the paper. It isn't quite so; the IWMFs began long before *News on Sunday* pegged out last November. Indeed, before the rest of us even had a chance to see the published product. And it wasn't just articles.

Conceding that the paper was "notorious for leaks", the authors add that "they were usually low-grade, harmless and fed to Right-On outfits such as *City Limits*." Questionable again I fear. What was noteable about *News on Sunday* was that the paper didn't leak, it *poured* out of its London and Manchester offices. It was if the staff of the left's new Sunday paper felt that the two offices weren't a big enough battleground, that its factions needed to strengthen their positions by waging war far from the Western Front between the Roboserve coffee machines and "Winken, Blinken and Nod", the delightfully named Scandinavian computer processing units. The effect of the torrent on the most sympathetic and naive of supporters was to suggest that not everything was quite right on *News on Sunday*.

But let us put the scale of the *News on Sunday* fiasco in context; or, as uncharitable souls might put it, come out with the alibis. Judged by Fleet Street's own standards the scale of the *NoS* disaster is no big deal. The *Mail on Sunday* had a turbulent and expensive launch and re-launch, *Today* is still ailing, expensively produced magazines still emerge over-hyped and under researched from the conglomerates, and promptly expire. And back in the early 1960s the International Publishing Corporation, persuaded by market research that a new, educated working class needed a paper up from the *Mirror* and the right-wing *Daily Sketch* (another stiff) launched the paper "born of the age we live in". Indeed, the reasoning in that instance could almost have come from *News on Sunday*'s brief. The result was the demise of the *Daily Herald* and the emergence of the IPC model *Sun*. Between 1961 and its fateful sale to Rupert Murdoch in 1969 the *Herald/Sun* lost more than £12 million. OK, *News on Sunday* blew £6.5 million in nine months, but IPC could use the economies of scale, and experience, and a million quid was *big* money back in those days.

But few on the left — or the right — will judge *NoS* by those standards. They will see the list of shareholders — local councils, individuals, trade unions — and mourn. Not so much for the lost £6.5 million but for the fact that *News on Sunday* has effectively destroyed any prospect of an independent national of the left getting off the ground in the next decade. No one in their right, or left, mind is going to fork out the loot.

Chippindale and Horrie have three great virtues as chroniclers of this saga: they were both insiders, Chippindale as "special projects editor", Horrie as editor of the colour section; they write wittily and well of the unfolding horror that was the paper; and, like the rest of us, they possess the 20/20 vision of hindsight. Thus can we, with them, note the permanent faction fights, the inability to decide the market place of the paper — left-wing *Sun* or *Mail on Sunday* — the insane decision to locate the head office in Manchester, the inadequate budget, the debilitating struggle between "Editor In Chief" John Pilger and editor Keith Sutton and, most of all, a management structure that institutionalised indecision and located power in, at a conservative estimate, around six committees/cabals.

The script in its turn gives rise to a host of comic acts: the Men in Suits, the Black Hand Gang and, in the authors' eyes the most spectacular of them all, the Grumbly Brigade (concerned, middle-class, leftist readers) and the Right-Ons, distinguishable only in name from that favourite butt of the tabloids *News on Sunday* aimed to challenge, the Loony Left.

It is here that Chippindale and Horrie come unstuck. Cute epithets make for easy reading but sloppy thinking. The Right-Ons are defined as that group of middle-class leftist non-journalists within the paper who provided its original inspiration, raised much of the funds and then saddled *News on Sunday* with ludicrous expectations and organisation built on posture not practicality. Thus were good, bad and indifferent journalists driven like lambs to the slaughter. It is a familiar tale. Journalists, whether they muck out for Murdoch or slave for *News on Sunday*, remain it seems innocent folk, ignorant of the ways of the world, whether corporate boardroom or neo-Trotskyist nest.

The Right-Ons are provided with a lineage. Quite the weakest part of the book are its opening 30 pages where the authors stumble though the history of Big Flame — the libertarian Marxist faction — and around the *Beyond The Fragments* group in search of the Right Ons' ancestry. That much of the actions of non-professionals on *NoS* were daft is beyond dispute — with that 20/20 vision again — but that their *and the journalists'* downfall was rooted in 1970s texts and leftist machinations is the tramline view of history. People don't need theory to cock it up, they can do it all by themselves, helped of course by the best will in the world.

But the Right-On dustbin word rattles through the book, picking up Covent Garden stall-holders, spiky haired music critics, socialists of wildly different persuasions, skewing the book towards a Man — or Person — of the People philistinism and, once again, locating the far left as unpersons, beyond the pale, out of the bounds of the rational discourse of plain folk. Like the paper, it isn't good enough. □

Look on my works, ye Mighty

John Dunn

The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers
PAUL KENNEDY *Unwin Hyman* £18.95

IN THE DECADES following the Second World War two huge and populous powers dominated the globe, as Tocqueville, over a century earlier, has prohesied that they would. Their awesome strength could be measured directly by the massive scale of their industrial production and their military might: their capacity to produce and to destroy.

Each, too, saw itself as the predestined standard bearer of the human future in a world of peace, prosperity, freedom and justice, menaced only by the malign and perverse energies of the other. Everyone now alive under the age of 50 learnt to understand politics — learnt their political hopes and fears, animosities and solidarities — within this overarching pattern of domination. Today, drastically, the pattern is beginning to change.

Paul Kennedy, an English historian now teaching at Yale and still firmly under the age of 50, grew up in the twilight of one great empire. In his new book he peers intelligently forward into the declining years of two others, drawing with some vigour on the lessons of the last five centuries. His book has created a considerable stir in the United States, as the Reagan presidency ebbs and the lacklustre candidates to succed it fill the television screens of the nation. But in truth his sober and careful investigation offers little aid (and less encouragement) to any intending candidate for the presidency. Kennedy does not threaten doom or deprecate the practical importance of political understanding and judgment, but the causes of the shifts in wealth and power which he diagnoses are plainly beyond the reach of any possible President. The most encouraging prospect which he holds out is one of graceful accommodation to the diminished scale of American economic power — a task for an American equivalent of Attlee or Macmillan but scarcely in itself as yet a platform on which to campaign for elevation to the White House.

The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers is an uneven book, at it incisive best when on Kennedy's professional specialism, the competition between Britain and Germany in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, but tiring palpably as it moves into the economic and military dynamics of the last quarter of a century. It is, however, never less than interesting and offers a very fair index of the accumulated potential contribution of modern western historiography to political understanding.

Why empires rise and fall is one of the oldest and most urgent questions in political understanding. Kennedy's answer to it is simple and in no sense novel. Power is a relation which rests upon the comparative wealth and capacity to exert force of the units in question. Wealth and coercive power, in their turn, rest partly on each other. The accumulation of power is a virtuous circle; the deflation of power a vicious circle. Dying powers are, in Joseph Chamberlain's phrase, weary Titans: their coercive reach overstretched and their material resources increasingly incapable of sustaining it. As Montesquieu observed a quarter of a millennium ago of the decline of Roman power, the occasions which produce great changes differ but the causes are always the same.

But this may be a little too brisk. There are some

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urgent potential qualifications to which Kennedy scarcely does justice. One is the practical significance of the invention of a form of military power, nuclear weapons, which could only now be used by any sane statesman very much on the margins of the struggle for world power. Another is the elusive but vivid role in modern politics of ideological competition. A third is the intimate dependence of the prosperity of every prosperous country in the world today on a system of international trade which can be sustained at all only by the most persistent and skilful political cooperation.

We can be quite certain that no one now alive has taken the measure of any of these factors; and it strains credulity to suppose that their conjunction makes no major difference to the logic of great power competition. The first may simply terminate human life on earth at any moment. (Partly because of this factor, any attempt to employ military power on any scale for direct economic appropriation abroad has become an intensely perilous adventure. Witness the western response to OPEC in 1973.) The second — the battle of ideologies — has been a source of endless hazard in the decades since 1945 and it would be absurd to expect it to retain the same form, as Japan replaces (for the present) the United States as the leading capitalist economy. But it is the third, the astounding productive growth of the post-war world economy, and the precarious institutional foundations on which this rests, that has truncated the economic power of America and Russia while leaving their overwhelming military supremacy prudently unchallenged. Here at last the ancient imagery of empire does begin to look genuinely archaic.

As Bernard Shaw teased in 1909: "Rome fell. Babylon fell. Hindhead's turn will come." By this he clearly did not mean to menace the stockbroker belt merely with the prospect that Britain's economic growth might fall behind that of France, or Germany, or even that marginal tax rates might for a time reach 98 per cent. The fall of empires used to be marked by ruins in the desert. The key question for the human future is whether the fall of empires is still going to be marked that way. On that point history necessarily has no guidance to offer. But what we can be quite sure is that, if it is so marked, the deserts in question will be extensive and very lightly populated — at least by human beings. □

On my own

Matthew Sweeney

I stop, in my tracksuit, on a sleeper.
I lay my ear to the line
and if I hear a hum, slide
down the embankment, and wait
among the coke-cans and beetles
till the express shakes by.
I think of last week, and McArdle
headless when the train had gone.
I scramble up to the tracks
that are blankly silver, and the sea
comes in view, and the young forest,
and the cross-country race I abandoned,
and my school's water tower — and I
head towards Dublin on my own.

The orphans' refusal

Leslie Dick

FIRST NOVELS CLASSICALLY enact an oedipal drama, in which the book is both an attack on and an appeal to its literary mothers and fathers, a process of initiation by which the writer takes his or her place in the world.

Matthew Yorke's novel **The March Fence** (Viking, £10.95), written in the shadow of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, takes dark philosophical questions of chance, fate and predestination and reworks them into a contemporary vision of the unconscious compulsion to risk and destroy yourself and all you hold dear. The protagonist is a youngest son, apprentice on the shop floor of his uncle's steel works, who sells his birthright for £10,000, gambling away the remote chance of ever inheriting the beloved family estate on the Borders of Scotland.

Gradually, Stephen is drawn into a maelstrom of uncanny wish-fulfilment and self-accusation. In brilliantly accurate and precise writing, Matthew Yorke presents the voices of Yorkshire foundry workers and aristocratic merchant bankers; exact evocations of the Border landscape are matched by specific descriptions of the process of welding steel.

These virtues of precision and craftsmanship, in welding as in writing, form the lifeline out of Stephen's nightmare and the backbone of this thoughtful and unusual novel.

Virtuoso description of jazz saves Adam Lively's **Blue Fruit** (Simon & Schuster, £9.95) from being a lightweight exercise in genre-bending. The problem of how to write about black American jazz and ghetto culture when you're a Cambridge and Yale educated British honky is dealt with by the old sf device of making the narrator an English ship's doctor in 1787 who inexplicably finds himself in present-day New York. He's taken in by a rather recognisable black family: overworked and underpaid long-suffering mother, "Uncle Tom" railway worker son who doesn't get his job promotion, easy-going jazz musician son who lives for his music, beautiful clever activist daughter for whom the hero falls. . . .

Soon they're assuring him that he's not included in the despised category "white man". He's the honorary exception mainly because he plays fiddle so well, his 18th-century training in improvisation ideal for playing jazz.

Unfortunately the dynamic ironies of this complicated culture shock are skated over, as the Martian-sends-a-letter-home syndrome overrides any possibility of real satire.

Cécile Drouin's **Child of the Red Land** (trans. Jan Dalley, Chatto, £11.95) also presents an alien consciousness in a strange land, but to devastating effect. Brown gives the point of view of a neglected girl child of French parents in Hanoi during the war, a child to whom the hard facts of history — race, imperialism and war — are urgent and impenetrable. Her mother hates her, adores her older sister. Her father is absent. Laurence escapes barefoot to the streets where she hangs out with the hungry "yellow people" and wishes she weren't white. She makes sense of the world by a desperate bricolage of her own wild guesses and interpretations woven through with myths and stories told by her lost Vietnamese nanny, her only loving friend. Thi Ba taught her to lie, to pray to Buddha and to fear evil spirits.

The book begins when Laurence is five years old; each chapter presents her predicament one year older, recounting the horrors of returning to France, going to school, encountering Catholicism, her illness, disappointment and isolation, always "a failed yellow person disguised as a white". A profound analysis of imperialism, subjectivity and childhood, this book is extremely beautiful and extremely painful to read.

The violence of mother-daughter conflicts and identifications is explored in detail in Anna Mitgutsch's **Punishment** (trans. Lisel Mueller, Virago, £11.95).

Swinging between first and third person, Vera reconstructs her mother's history, going over the circumstances that produced this Bad Mother with her endless systematic beatings and impossible expectations.

Questioning her own psychic inheritance after her mother's death, Vera confronts and struggles with the internalised mother, seemingly compelled to repeat those acts of violence with lovers, friends and, potentially, her own daughter.

At the heart of Robin Morgan's **Dry Your Smile** (Women's Press, £5.95) is another destructive mother-daughter attachment, this time between a child soap opera star (who grows up into a famous feminist, like Robin Morgan) and her single parent, whose classic cocktail of mingled demands and rejection has the usual poisonous effect. *Dry Your Smile* is that wonderful phenomenon, the 400-page American feminist autobiographical blockbuster, to be compulsively read in one sitting, preferably while in bed with the flu. The heroine, Julian, leaves her politico husband, discovers the joys of lesbian love and copes with the death of her crazy mother, all against a backdrop of the changing Women's Liberation Movement in New York.

She even writes a novel. (Surprise me!) Plummeting through this diffuse entertainment, it's weird to recall the intensity and focus of Robin Morgan's political poetry.

In contrast, Kenneth Graham's **Hokusai's Wave** (Chatto, £11.95) demands to be taken seriously.

A portrait of two arts administrators hitting 40, trying to make a life together in the North of England, it sounds bleak, but the book is intelligent and painfully accurate in recounting the near-misses and misunderstandings and occasional perfect moments of problematic love. He's from Australia, she's from Scotland; they meet on the specific, difficult terrain of Britain now. Serious about sex, and work, this novel recalls aspects of D.H. Lawrence, the clarity of detail and overarching image of the falling wave holding the reader steady throughout.

Words like "accomplished" and "promising" are the marks of the initiation ceremony that the "first novelist" undergoes, rewards for the demonstration of competence and conventionality so many first novels perform. Some books simply fail the test; others are like outlaws, or orphans, who refuse it.

These are the best, where the negotiation of literary traditions sidesteps complete submission to find a new voice. □

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The long, long love affair

Geoff Dyer

Oscar and Lucinda
PETER CAREY *Faber* £10.95

ONE OF PETER CAREY's best stories, "The Chance", tells of a disintegrating society dominated by the Genetic Lottery. For 2,000 Inter-Galactic dollars, anyone can enter the lottery and emerge with a new body and age but with memories more or less intact.

The outcome is random: the narrator of the story has ended up with the big, broken body of an ageing street-fighter; the slender-limbed woman he loves also insists on taking a Chance, as the lottery is called, and returns as a huge, leather-skinned 20-stoner. Something similar has happened to Peter Carey.

He built his reputation in Australia in the '70s with his masterly short stories and consolidated it with a first novel *Bliss* (1981). He made it big — in every sense — in 1985 with the 600 pages of *Illywhacker*, which was shortlisted for the Booker. *Oscar and Lucinda* is almost as long. The great strength of a story like "The Chance" was the way Carey packed 20 pages with as much inventiveness as you find in the average novel. In a sense, then, he was always bursting at the seams. His stories felt like glimpses of a much larger imaginative world and, in the last two novels, aided by some agile software, he has thrown the doors wide open. It is as if he has gone through a *generic* lottery and ended up with the intimidating bulk of a Victorian novelist.

For the first 400 pages *Oscar and Lucinda* reads like a cross between Dickens and Edmund Gosse, between *Father and Son* and *Dombey and Son*; for the last hundred it is like *Voss* in the style of a quietly benign illywhacker (White and son?). Oscar's father is a member of the Plymouth brethren and, like Edmund, the growing boy is overwhelmed by the sinfulness of virtually everything. He defects to the Anglican church and goes up to Oxford where he becomes a priest and a compulsive gambler. In 1865, after Oxford, he takes a boat to Australia and *en route* meets Lucinda, a lonely strong-willed young woman who shares Oscar's passion for gambling and has just acquired a glassworks in Sydney. Their friendship is choked both by their own shyness and by the scandal it provokes. Finding their love blocked by many impediments and misunderstandings, they hit on an absurd bet which will, they hope, bind them together: Oscar will undertake a gruelling expedition to deliver a glass church to a missionary with whom he believes Lucinda is in love. If he succeeds then — so the wager is arranged — Lucinda's fortune becomes his and they will become each other's.

These are the bare bones of a story which takes pride in its limitless powers of incidental accumulation. Typically the short chapters begin midway through a scene and gradually, like someone walking back up a downward escalator, make their way back to the beginning. Alternatively we begin in the wings and watch new characters (there are dozens of them, Dickensians to a person: "Arthur Phelps was a broad man with a plastic face, a big chest and a large belly which he liked to refer to as his bellows . . .") make their way towards the centre stage where they will participate briefly in the main action before it is suspended once again. The characters are halted in mid-stride, mid-gesture; scenes are suspended in mid-crisis as everything makes its way jerkily towards everything else.

While this makes the book frustrating to read, it does ensure that every sentence is animated by the rhythm of Lucinda's exasperated passion and Oscar's stick-limbed awkwardness: "'There,' he said triumphantly, as if he had caught the laugh, as if the laugh was the point of it all, and he was like a man who has trapped a grasshopper in mid-air, smiling as if the miracle were tickling his palm."

An artist is usually someone who develops material in such a way that it generates a principle of self-ordering that is also, simultaneously, an active agent of self-editing. In Carey's case, however, as he has matured as an artist so the potential for self-ordering in his material has become increasingly identified with its capacity for endless self-expansion. With *Illwhacker* he hit upon an idea and a form that enabled him to wander at whim across Australian geography and history. In *Oscar and Lucinda* he has all but abolished the distinction between narrative progression and sideways expansion.

Lucinda is both touched and infuriated by Oscar; likewise Carey's novel tries the reader's patience as much as it entertains. Appropriately, then, you leave this book with feelings similar to those experienced at the end of a long and not entirely successful love affair: for the last year it might have been more trouble than it was worth but, once the end is in sight, you look back on all the good things and almost wish it could go on longer. But, mostly, you wish things had turned out differently. □

No tourist guide to death

Helen Birch

The Forbidden Zone
MICHAEL LESY *Deutsch* £11.95

DEATH, BEFORE OUR OWN comes upon us, is something we tend to see at one remove: in newsreels which place it elsewhere; in movies which provide vicarious thrills. We live as if we were immortal and, when someone close to us dies, there are suddenly no rules, no precedents.

At the beginning of his book, Michael Lesy tells his family history. His father, a Jew, fled from Poland and poverty to America; in England he financed himself through college and qualified as a doctor. Lesy was born in his parents' middle age: "They had waited so long because they didn't trust the world." He has already written a book called *Wisconsin Death Trip*, the haunting, true story of a "holocaust without Jews" in 19th-century America. "Jews," he says "have been on intimate terms with the Angel of Death since the Exodus." Now his father is dying. He offers these details as an oblique explanation for the obsession which drove him to travel the USA in search of people for whom death is a trade.

The Forbidden Zone is a personal journey into a heart of darkness, framed by the quest for a rationale: what motivates people to immerse themselves in death? How do they cope and what effects does it have on them?

Lesy's discoveries are often moving and sometimes terrible. At a pathologist's lab, he finds himself apologising to the corpse for the clinical disregard for his humanity. Later, a homicide detective tells Lesy that he must separate himself: "Whoever's on the floor, it's not you . . . it's somebody else, *something* else." Lesy vehemently denies the detective's charge that "we're all murderers" and the turning point in his education comes at a slaughterhouse, where he shoots a bolt into the skull of a steer: he begins to recognise just how easy it is to kill in a controlled environment, and how strangely compulsive.

The sanctimonious tone which slips into the early interviews is gradually replaced by the raw urgency of his need to understand. His visit to a *shochet* (a Jewish slaughterhouse) becomes a kind of absolution for his own killing; here the killer is protected from the mortal consequences of his actions by holy law. If we must kill, Lesy decides, then at least we should respect the sanctity of life. At an undertakers, in an Aids hospice, on Death Row, he hears how people who work with death cleanse themselves by similar rituals. Some are mystics; one detective cites the Ten Commandments and keeps photographs of all his worst cases. Death Row wardens are protected by a bizarre system of "cutouts" — each officer becoming a kind of fall guy for his colleagues. At every stage of the death process, the condemned prisoner is passed from one group of guards to the next; as Lesy is strapped into the electric chair by six guards, he is shown how three buttons, only one of which carries the charge to the chair, are pressed simultaneously by three volunteers.

Lesy's journey is marked by signs and coincidences; a mild paranoia suffuses logic as he struggles to find a point to it all, "an antidote to the fear of death". Some of the stories are shocking: in the most spirited and disturbing part of the book a professional killer trained by the army explains how, in Vietnam, he found a way of uniting his "hidden" Cherokee religion with his loyalty to the US Constitution. Lesy's reaction is ambivalent; he admires how "religion filled his life" but learns how the memories of killing eventually penetrate the fragile membrane we call "sanity".

Lesy is aware of the exotic fascination of his subject; his book is never entirely free of the kind of mock innocence which make his stories seem even more bizarre, or of a tendency to turn the experience of horror into shivery pleasure. But his candour gives the book a kind of moral freedom. He makes judgments, but manages to avoid grandiose statements and designs for living. From his immersion in death he affirms life, in the knowledge that, like so many of his subjects, all he can do is continue to follow the signs. "When your father dies," he tells himself, "the sky'll fall, and when you die, the universe'll end. Until then, you're nothing but a goddamn tourist." □

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One shot at a time

Spielberg's Empire of the Sun *has been praised for its maturity. Well, says filmmaker* **CHRIS PETIT**, *it's certainly faithful, respectful. . .*

J.G. BALLARD'S novel *Empire of the Sun*, based on his time as a boy in late colonial Shanghai under Japanese occupation, is inspired by the rich odours of the Orient, which, as a walk down Gerrard Street in London today makes plain, are more spiced and pungent than the anaemic smell of England.

Their recollection prompts Ballard into rediscovering the submerged world of a wild childhood spent first roaming wartime Shanghai, then as a prisoner of the Japanese: the perfect CV, one would have thought, for a career in postmodernist literature. Perfumes, rank and sweet, saturate the novel, acting as tiny detonations that explode huge, vivid images that one is tempted to call cinematic: coffins garlanded with (paper) flowers are tipped into the Yangtze, only to be washed back ashore by the tide; silk sheets are "scented by the body of a woman with the face of a film star". From the start, the story is described as unspooling like a movie in the bursting and muddled head of Ballard's fictional younger self, the boy Jim.

Empire of the Sun is so much about lost private images of childhood that reading the book is like watching a highly developed, secret home movie: the prose equivalent of a sequence of flickering pictures on a Steenbeck editing machine, that stage of film viewing when the images are at their most concentrated and dreamlike. This quality is inevitably lost in the book's translation into a major Hollywood film. The result is respectful: Steven Spielberg, spurned by his peers in Hollywood despite his enormous commercial success, now seems to want to become the David Lean of his generation, and his Anglophile tendencies are getting more pronounced. The controlled surrealism of the original becomes flatly epic and the complexities of Ballard's story of an unsentimental education are reduced to a simple loss of innocence. The highly imaginative becomes the highly organised and the film, shot partly in Shanghai itself, with thousands of extras, is too often about crowd control on a grand scale.

Faithfulness is not the problem for once. If anything, the film sticks too much to the original. Tom Stoppard's script offers a Cook's Tour of the book, and images that one might easily attribute to Spielberg in fact come from Ballard, like the memorable one of spilt talcum powder on a parquet flooring in which Jim traces the choreography of his mother's arrest by the Japanese: "his mother's bare feet whirling within the clear images of heavy boots, like the patterns of complicated dances set out in his parent's foxtrot and tango manuals". Spielberg's problem throughout is that he offers flat-footed alternatives to Ballard's own conclusions to scenes, which invariably refer back the central pivot of Jim himself. Here Ballard ends with Jim in a broken mirror ("pieces

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of himself seemed to fly across the room") under which he falls alseep, thus creating a haunting image: "this jeweled icon of a small exploding boy". (Much of the excitement of the book lies in Ballard's ability to be simultaneously inside and outside his character.) Spielberg has Jim opening the window instead, and a wind of biblical force (from whence? one wonders: the film provokes awkward questions) makes a pretty picture of swirling powder. We are treated to quite a lot of Spielberg's cinema wonder in the course of two and a half hours.

Unlike Ballard, Spielberg is of course left looking from the outside only, doubly so when one thinks how alien this strange boy, one of the last products of English imperial society, must be to such a definitively American filmmaker. As remote, one is tempted to add, as an extra-terrestial: if England and the past are other countries, then Shanghai in 1941 is for Spielberg another planet . . . and he shoots it like a good tourist.

Jim's attraction to American culture is played up and, unlike the book, his most sustained relationship is with the American Basie. This concession to marketing sees Basie transformed from an effeminate slip, given to wearing face-powder, into a hulking piece of Method who takes care of the Americanisation of Jim during their internment. The Brits by comparison appear altogether neglected, particularly Miranda Richardson who is scarcely established as the Mrs Victor (Vincent in the book) who reluctantly takes Jim into her charge. His adolescent pangs for her are noted but scarcely explored (the less complicated relationship with Basie is exhausted) and one can't help notice that Spielberg's cinema is entirely without undercurrents. It offers instead little capsules whose meaning is always transparent, which is, in fairness, what American cinema has always been best at: plain speaking and simple actions. But the look of the film is too antiseptic, the costumes too tattily chic. What is dressed down by Ballard is tarted up by Spielberg so that the "threadbare" ceremonies of departing kamikaze pilots, from the aerodrome by the prison camp, become sentimental and elegant adieus. Jim's attraction to military formations and hardware, his admiration for the warrior of whatever side, calls for John Milius rather than Spielberg — as demonstrated in the former's magnificent epic of a childhood in war, *The Wind and the Lion*. Then again, Sergio Leone, another great exponent of the epic form, could have made more of two major themes lost by Spielberg: time and memory.

Instead of time, Spielberg concentrates upon space. His approach involves drawing out everything beforehand on story-boards. As a result his compositions too often get trapped in the frozen dynamic of the comic-strip. Too many sequences — the spectacular bombing of the airfield by American planes, for instance — become merely technical progressions, without flow. Jean-Luc Godard once pointed out how most modern filmmakers misunderstand the term framing, taking it to mean the composition of a particular shot rather than its relationship to the one before and the one after. The centring of the image, to the exclusion of what Godard meant, is what *Empire of the Sun* is about: Spielberg appears to have fotgotten that film runs in time not in space, which is why this feels 153 minutes long. □

TELEVISION

A week in the death

W. Stephen Gilbert

ON MOTHERING SUNDAY we learned that my mother's life expectancy, as the medics say, was limited to about a year. Dealing with death, sudden or anticipated, imminent or past, one's own or other people's, is something we all have to do and do in our own way and at our own pace. Even when the subject of mortality is not exercising quite so much of my thinking, I find television's continual harping on the matter destructive and debilitating. In the present circumstances, it becomes unbearable.

"Continual harping" — do I overstate? Consider that, this year so far, we have had a five-part series on coping with death, *Merely Mortal*; nine documentaries and a film drama on Aids plus a *Network* examination of Aids coverage; a play about cot death and a run of new and repeated dramas made for *Film On Four* virtually all of which have hinged on a significant death; the usual quota of thriller series and murder mysteries where death is just a plot device (*The Contract, Inspector Morse, Floodtide, Crossfire, The Fear*, two adaptations of Ruth Rendell novels); documentaries in current affairs, science and access slots about hit-and-miss treatment of disease, premature death, near-death experience, assassination psychology, abortion, suicidal depression, legal killing and the aftermath of the life-losses at Zeebrugge and Hungerford. Need I add the usual plethora of death-infected movies? — *Studio Murders, Death at Broadcasting House, The Killers, Murder by Proxy, He Died With His Eyes Open, And I Alone Survived, Sherlock Holmes Faces Death, Death in a French Garden, Death In Venice, Kiss Me Deadly* . . . it's a seemingly endless list. And then there's *The News*: can you remember a bulletin that lacked death, destruction or funeral? I have never understood why the news managers deem it one of the essential functions of their service to send a crew to cover every single funeral in Northern Ireland.

So when the Jungian psychotherapist Ean Begg notes that "death seems to be coming out of the closet at last", he ain't kidding, even if it does conjure a rather bizarre image. Begg was launching a new series with what was to my mind the somewhat minatory title: **Is There Something After Death?**. A moment's thought and you realised he could hardly stagger through a half-dozen programmes if he thought the answer lay in the negative. *Begging the Question* therefore might have been a more appropriate title.

The opener turned out to be one of those pieces that has us humanists and rationalists yelling at the screen. Our host came on like some sanctimonious parson of television's salad days. He had gratefully received many letters from viewers retailing their experiences of bereavement and was pleased to top these with anecdotes of his own. These so-called religious experiences were nothing of the kind: the man whose dead wife came to him in a dream to reveal where her money was hidden had obviously been told by her in life but had merely forgotten. Ean Begg's eyes glistened, however. "Why *shouldn't* our final dying lead on to a glorious resurrection?" cried he. Well, Ean, why *should* it? There isn't any kind of scientific basis for such an outcome.

Nothing daunted, Begg called on a woman reckoned to be a spiritualist medium. Swallowing the routine whole, he interviewed her. It's certainly true that the woman's presence created a strong, strange sense of *déjà vu*: that smilingly bland assurance, coupled with an iron certainty that brooked no doubt, that chilling serenity in being right . . . why, it was the very reincarnation of the Prime Minister. Meanwhile, our host squirmed and smarmed at her feet like a veritable Cecil Parkinson.

Isn't this a touch severe on a harmless series that is only trying to bring a crumb of comfort to anxious viewers? I think not. It is the kind of enterprise that makes me feel quite passionately puritanical because I believe it is positively wicked to mislead those viewers and tell them such rubbish with all the authority that the box bestows. What is missing from the account is the depth of suggestibility one is prone to when in a state of emotional disorientation.

By contrast, another day-time series called **Life File** began with some heartening footage of a positive programme of rehabilitative exercising for cardiac patients. "I feel a fitter man than I did 15 years ago." a convert to jogging told the researcher. Scrupulously monitored and analysed, these exercise programmes cost little more than the initial equipment outlay and the wages of staff. Even so, the NHS cannot afford the luxury; the scheme profiled in the programme, at Dudley Hospital, is funded by the sports-gear manufacturers Adidas (didn't one of that company's partners die prematurely of a heart attack?).

Chronic heart disease requires drastic and expensive measures. From Canada came an award-winning programme shown here in the Horizon slot, **The Heart of Another**. The *vérité* shooting style ensured maximum involvement at the visceral level: you wanted to leap up and help rush the donated heart to its recipient. And of all surgical sights — and we viewers have become inured to just about anything the sawbones can throw at us — the heart transplant is the most awesome, a thumping (in every sense) organ being sewn into the body of somebody new, crushed ice being slung in with it as though it might be some sophisticated cocktail.

Modern medical documentaries are relentlessly realistic. So badly did you want the bewildered and frightened patient to pull through, so cruelly thwarted did you feel when they lost him. Only momentarily though. It's a funny thing, but the success of the subsequent operation on another patient had something of the quality of an anti-climax — for all that (well, naturally) you were relieved. People are quite commonly dying on camera these days; it's all part of the passing show. You start to expect it and — you know what? — you don't even grit your teeth any more. □

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POP

The Britvic in us all

Simon Reynolds

"ENGLAND" has always been a problem for English rock bands. How to incorporate a sense of the local into a music that does not grow organically out of this environment, but has always been an alien import? For most, English parochialism has been something to be broken out of into American dreams, or plain broken, in pure negation (the Stones' "sleepy London town", the Pistols' council tenancies and shopping schemes).

The Smiths were celebrated by their admirers and scorned by their detractors precisely for their Englishness. *Viva Hate!* (HMV), **Morrissey**'s first album since the Smiths split, sees him continue to wax nostalgic for the cloistered drabness of a disappearing England. Morrissey's songs aren't so much a matter of retrospective "realism" as an enchanted fantasy compounded from personal reveries of the Manchester of his 1960s/'70s adolescence and imagery from early '60s social realist films like *A Kind of Loving* and *A Taste of Honey*.

"Everyday Is Like Sunday" (about a dismal seaside resort), "Late Night, Maudlin Street" (wraith-like guitar, entranced reminiscences of 1972 and the declaration "I never stole a happy hour here") — these and other tracks pose the question: why dwell so morbidly and with such loving attention to detail on the claustrophobia, brutalisation and tedium of this bygone time? David Stubbs gives us the answer: "As grey and repressive as this lost world was, the inchoate, colourific entropy of the '80s is worse. At least *then* you stood out, if only to be beaten up." He hails Morrissey not as "an ombudsman or figure of the '80s, but as a horrified figure *against* the '80s".

As such, Morrissey remains the emblem for the now-consciousness of British alternative rock, his very identity constructed in opposition and willed difference (to the mainstream). His constituency could well consist entirely of playground misfits who like him *chose* to "want more" and thus incur the cold shoulder, jeers and blows of "The Ordinary Boys". For Morrissey, "people *don't* change, do they? Your past is what makes you", and he's determined not to change ("grow up", adjust his expectations, get less sensitive and more lifeskilled) just to please the "people who didn't like you then/and certainly don't like you now".

It's this loss of the idea of change, of pop-as-reinvention-of-yourself, that makes Morrissey such a revealing figurehead for '80s rock. An interesting comparison is with The Jam, another obsessively English rock group, who topped music paper readers' polls in the early '80s as The Smiths did in the late '80s. Paul Weller harked back to the '60s in the hope of rekindling that era's poptimistic belief in the future, its sense of an emergent, classless, with-it new order. Even in the early '80s, Englishness could still connote action and a sense of personal agency: hence The Jam's final anthems "Absolute Beginners" and "Beat Surrender". Now Englishness can only connote a lost spirit all but extirpated by the Thatcher-sponsored Americanisation of Britain, a '60s North that however bleak, seems romantic compared to the new Sarf's emergent spiv culture.

And "revolt", for Morrissey, does not take the form of action but of withdrawal, enervation and neurasthenia, a refusal to participate in the great pop party except as saturnine gatecrashers on *TOTP*. The only hope is private (a redemptive love between two exiles on main street), and the only engagement with the public world is infantile and unconstructive (the fantasy of "Margaret on the Guillotine").

Mark Sinker, *NME's* last critic, recently compared The Smiths (trapped by Englishness) unfavourably with **The Fall,** whose singer/Führer Mark E. Smith, thanks to acid-fried sensibilities and an instinctively avant-garde poetic bent, alchemises Northern squalor into a kind of magic realism. Smith has expressly ensured The Fall are irreducible to the banal formulae of media discourse: a "strategy" of obfuscation and contrariness that has bred mystique and a rather uncritical veneration.

I'm almost tempted to say the man is a charlatan, (only one in 50 of his lines resonates for me) but then the point of The Fall is to be the one band that unseats the whole apparatus of criticism (which is why critics love them). Also the music, and that one line in 50, are so *good*.

The emotion, and the supreme value, in The Fall is bloodymindedness, expressed in a refusal of yuppy self-improvement and the trendy's flexibility of thought. This can come across as a self-defeating retrenchment in a dishevelled, inconsistent set of bigotries and bad habits, fetishised because at least they're "real". Smith is the man who talks of having voted Tory because he couldn't abide the local trendy lefty Labour candidate, of favouring the Bomb because conscription is a bigger blight.

On the new LP *The Frenz Experiment* (Beggars Banquet), there's a song called "Carry Bag Man" about Smiths' inability to be seen using the swish, designer briefcase his wife's parents gave him. On the earlier single "US 80s 90s", he was defiant about a man's right to kill himself with fags and booze.

The music even *sounds* obstinate: bludgeoning, undanceable rhythms based in rockabilly, garage punk and the Velvets, combined with mesmerising guitars and keyboards. Notwithstanding a couple of fluke hits, The Fall has always been unpop, frozen in reaction to chartpop, a baleful and reproachful spectre.

Compare this to Morrissey, who turns similar lyrical concerns into pure pop, by making a melodrama out of his martyrdom.

But it's the similarities between Mark E. Smith and the ex-Smith that are more notable. Both are working-class Mancunian misfits with a love/hate fascination with (Northern) England. Both work on the underlying conviction that bigotries and "the will to stupidity" behind unwarrantable beliefs are what gives you an identity. Both have brilliant minds trapped within precise limits of what's "sense" (their feeling of self is too strong to allow them to take on the self-confounding complexities of postmodernism). Neither's work is limned by a sense of trajectory: the lyrical and musical themes are constantly reshuffled, the basic position of exile is reiterated. By shunning the timely, they have created timeless rock. And both have just released cracking records. □

DANCE

Small time

Stephanie Jordan

Dance Advance
Brighton Gardner Centre
London City Ballet
Sadler's Wells

CLASSICAL ballet remains the dominant form of dance. It was here first and, ever since, it has been first — in funding strategies, company size, public and media presence. Audiences can admire the beauties of classical style and formal construction, but they also warm to the elegance and glamour, to the escapist themes of the classics, and thus they perpetuate the majesterial position of ballet within the dance hierarchy.

Yet the British appetite for ballet seems insatiable: whether for more of the same or, far more daring, creating opportunity for balletic innovation outside the large companies. There is a well-founded belief that the form is still alive, relevant, potent for development and flexible enough to lose some of its grandness for small theatres and arts centres.

Recently, two very different answers have been offered to the demand for more ballet: the **London City Ballet** providing more of the same and, not yet ten years old, demonstrating its strength as a market competitor in a popular first season at Sadler's Wells; and **Dance Advance,** which opened at the Gardner Centre, Brighton, a chamber group that aims to take ballet into intimate venues and to innovate within the form.

Dance Advance makes bold claims: it's "about progress, breaking down barriers, bridging the gap between classical ballet and modern dance companies". On that note, the group has come together permanently for the first time and begun a busy tour of the south and east of England — with six fine dancers, all ex-Royal Ballet or Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, well-subsidised and publicised, and supported by Quorum, an excellent group of accompanying musicians. The project is undeniably impressive and ambitious. However, judging by the current programme at least, the old artistic barriers are still there, as high as ever.

Kenneth MacMillan's *Sea of Troubles,* based on *Hamlet,* is the most substantial work. It answers the demands of small resources inasmuch as props and set are minimal: an isolated curtain from which a bloodied body might fall, a ghostly plastic mac, crowns of gold or circlets of flowers, cloaks and boots, items sufficient for us to identify characters or scenes. MacMillan reads the play as a sequence of high-expressionist, high-theatrical aphorisms and we feel lucky that we know the Shakespeare in order to make sense of his episodes. The performers' constantly switching roles and the mix of music (Webern and Martinu) are additional layers to contend with; MacMillan doesn't use them to provide new insights into the drama. Today, the style looks naive, more likely to inspire mirth than the deep emotional reaction that MacMillan presumably intends. □

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Choo-San Goh's *Moments Remembered* is an odd choice. Our first opportunity in this country to see this choreographer's work live it may be, but *Moments* simply confirms his known penchant for sweet-romantic nothings. In *Classified,* four Dance Advance choreographers, Michael Batchelor, Susan Crow, Jennifer Jackson and Sheila Styles, bring together a series of stereotypes from lonely hearts columns. Limply amusing and lethargic (Jackson and Crow have made much better work independently), it completes a musty programme uniting the cosy good behaviour, outworn gender constructions and late-expressionist crudity that still characterises the RB companies today.

Harold King's London City Ballet plays safe with the classics, fragments of classics and some facile pseudo-modern work: "good story" pieces, *divertissements* with a 20th-century frisson, much theatricality. Nevertheless, you cannot deny the value of LCB's contribution. It has specialised in taking work to small venues and towns,many untouched by the big ballet companies, and, while it has grown in size and shape, there is a commitment to maintaining this special relationship with the small-scale circuit. But the company has also demonstrated considerable administrative and artistic acumen: a strong following, an excellent record for private sponsorship (IBM, ADT and BP all generous, and their masterstroke, the Princess of Wales' patronage), and standards have risen markedly. The company's presence is positive, and there are now some creditable productions of the classics.

Best of all is *La Sylphide,* presented at Sadler's Wells and, on all accounts, a sensible choice: the perfect vehicle for a small company, choreographed by Bournonville for the intimate Royal Danish Theatre, and with an unusually high content of character work. Act I, where a young Scottish farmer falls under a sylph's spell on his wedding day, avoids the weakness of the *corps* in 19th-century classical style. Here, we see the piece in Solveign Stergaard's lively, careful production, while the principals Marian St Claire and Tim Almaas — classical requirements under control — attend to the poetic evocation essential to the work.

Now, the tenth anniversary looming, it is time to grow up. LCB must address itself to a rigorous raising of classical standards from the *corps* through to the soloists. We need to see dancers working their backs as a secure, telling centre, stronger and more precise in their legs and feet, removing the short-cuts that gloss over shaky classical technique and obscure the clarity of progression and shape.

LCB is already taking in hand the issue of developing new choreography. It plans to run a major workshop series as soon as it can find a sponsor, and the hope is that a creative talent will emerge to bolster future programmes and perhaps, in the long term, define a company style. These are not easy undertakings, but LCB has shown remarkably good sense so far, and there's no pretension about what it stands for or where it's heading. □

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THEATRE

To laugh or to cry

Victoria Radin

The Jew of Malta
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE *Barbican*
The Tutor
JAKOB LENZ adapt. BERTOLT BRECHT *Old Vic*

THERE ARE TWO basic responses to the spectacle of human duplicitousness or (a currently embarrassing term) evil. One is to advance towards it: in recognition, amusement, admiration, even awe. The other is the retreating posture of disgust, denial or fear.

The former is now much the more acceptable approach, and accounts for the huge success of Caryl Churchill's rather nebulous moral stance on City sheenanegans in *Serious Money.* It also may go some way to explaining the Royal Shakespeare Company's choice of **The Jew of Malta** and Barry Kyle's rip-roaring embellishment of Marlowe's world of Machiavellian persuasion. But it also may provide a reason as to why **The Tutor**, Brecht's adaptation of Jakob Lenz's satire on the 18th-century German bourgeoisie, heavy with unsportsmanlike disgust, fell down with such a clangour at the Old Vic.

Marlowe's play — which was last performed in London in 1964 — is usually credited with inventing the stage image of the wicked Jew which enabled Shakespeare, a few years later, to compose his Shylock — but with much more humanity. In fact, the herd mentality of Shakespeare's vengeful Christians always bothers me much more than his undeniable anti-semitism; and, if Marlowe's Barabas looks more like a total villain than Shylock, well, at least he has a better reason for it and all the other folk are horrible too. Though not quite as terrible as Barry Kyle's production would make out.

It opens, indeeed, with John Carlisle's Machevil ascending from the red-rimmed pits of hell in a fire-damaged black robe to present the "tragedy of a Jew" with the observation, dear to the hearts of both Machiavelli and of Marlowe, that there is no sin but ignorance. Carlisle returns soon afterwards as Ferneze, suavely dissembling Governor of Malta, Christian only in name, who swiftly divests all the Jews of Malta of half their possessions. Barbaras, refusing either to convert to Christianity or to yield his share or, in fact, to have the wool pulled over his eyes ("Preach me not out of my possessions") has his entire wealth taken away. His progress ever after, were Marlowe interested in anything like character development, could be seen as both the revenge for and accommodation of the despised condition of the Jew as he goes about engineering murders and poisoning nuns before turning his attention to friars and the conquering Turks, finally being duped himself by the white-suited — perhaps the leader of a California encounter therapy? — Christian Governor.

Marlowe, not without the sort of admiration he betrayed towards his rather more noble anti-heroes Tambourlaine and Faustus, pours every major ghastly attribute into Barabas — murdering your own daughter after you have effectively slain her fiancé must come pretty high in the stakes — and this is, if not quite the tragedy Marlowe designated it, a very dark comedy indeed. Yet everything about Kyle's production, and Alun Armstrong's agreeably scampish Barabas, attempts to lighten things. The friars catch the poisoned nuns' vomit over the balustrades of Bob Crowley's witty set of stacked packing crates; Armstrong, who wears a jaunty fez to greet the Turks (an embroidery of Marlowe's Zelig-like apprehension of his villain that Woody Allen would have appreciated) comes on like Maurice Chevalier with a banjo and straw hat to serenade a courtesan. It is a brilliantly achieved performance of a likeable rogue whose deviousness we can applaud and cackle *with* rather than *at*: innocent, for the most part, of racial overtones. Phil Daniels, playing Barabas' slave with characteristic lugubriousness, puts his face in a bowl of porridge and, for a while thereafter, wears a clown-face of giant white mouth and bulb-nose. Cheeky and swift and cunning and, as the programme note suggests, Ortonesque — Kyle's staging is expert in assessing the cool temper of our times.

The Tutor offers us a humiliated man, also surrounded by his social betters, who instead of taking revenge on them takes revenge on himself. Driven into hiding by the discovery of his affair with the daughter of his employer (which could have been avoided, Lenz implies, if they agreed to provide the tutor with the means of transport to a brothel) and fearful that it will happen again, the tutor Lauffer castrates himself. The girl whom he fancied marries him anyway and, in this capon condition, Lauffer staggers forth.

In other words, the impoverished but educated tutor must literally deform himself in order to fit into a base society. This is heavy satire, made slightly rancid by disgust, not at all welcoming. Everyone — from the village teacher who hides him but then turns vicious prig, to the philosophy student who venerates women until he marries one — is a jerk or a villain and this is not a generous play. Disgust never is.

But it would probably be an intriguing curio, appealing to some more thoughtful era, were it not for the lack of direction from Angelika Hurwicz, a former member of the Berliner Ensemble under Brecht who appears to have tried to resuscitate an historical production. The tone is quaint, Brechtian: cameos of scenes framed by little curtains and obviously flown and trundled sets. This seems an excellent device for pointing the cruelty of the behaviour we see, but it needs to be stylishly executed. Apart from Kevin McNally's very physical tutor, bowing and scraping with clumsy servility, no one is defined; and the evening, essentially a series of set pieces, each making a dialectical point, rolls on aimlessly and — it has to be said — charmlessly. It makes a forlorn second installment to Jonathan Miller's brave new tenure at the Old Vic. □

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Jackson & Dukakis

Ms Donna Haber, London N14

Alexander Cockburn finds what he calls the media's racist hatred of Jesse Jackson to be "quite striking" (*NS* 18 March). I would not disagree, but I find equally striking the efforts by people on the left to overlook and excuse such things as Jackson's anti-semitic remarks and his acceptance of a prominent supporter who admires Adolf Hitler.

I agree that it is exciting that a black person with many progressive views is attracting so many votes, but before giving him our wholehearted support, should we not take him seriously enough to ask the same questions that we would of a white candidate? I for one am not at all sure that I could support a candidate who appears to have anti-semitic views, no matter what his virtues are.

And how about a rather more unbiased account of his opponents? Mr Cockburn's description of Governor Dukakis, for example, makes him sound quite right wing and objectionable by leaving out such issues as his support of the Equal Rights Amendment and of abortion issues, of Government child care provision and public investment in housing, education, transport, shelters for the homeless (all implemented in Massachusetts), and his support for a nuclear freeze and opposition to the Nicaraguan contras. He is clearly not a right-winger, even if he *is* standing against Jackson. I don't mean to argue for Dukakis or against Jackson, but merely for a bit more thoughtfulness and objectivity on the left.

The merger

Colin Low, Leeds

You asked for views on the merger, so here are mine. I like both *New Society* and the *New Statesman*, though I read the latter more of late since I have started taking it as a talking newspaper. I think they in many ways serve the same range of interests. Where they do not, I feel sure they will complement one another. So a merger in many ways seems to make good sense, and I am quite sympathetic to it.

My only reservation is that the *New Statesman* has an avowed commitment — to the socialist left, broadly and self-critically conceived in all its diversity. *New Society*, to the best of my knowledge, does not have this, and I think its abandonment would be a real loss. I would therefore hope that it can be preserved. I think it is important to retain the sort of forum for liberal, enquiring, self-critical dialogue of the left, but on the basis of a shared socialist commitment, which the *Statesman* provides.

C. Donnison, London N.

The *New Statesman* is unique among UK weekly publications in having a well balanced analytical blend of political, economic, international and cultural subjects with editorials which, since the recent change of regime, once again have bite. This distinctive quality is the journal's strength and should remain unchanged whatever solution is adopted to overcome its present problems.

New Society, on the other hand, is an entirely different animal whose circulation difficulties relate directly to its subject matter and style. Spawned by the 1960s, *New Society* is neither an academic, professional nor political journal, relying instead on a social scientific (and often pseudo-scientific) and anecdotal content increasingly irrelevant to the late '80s in which the important issues are becoming starker by the day.

Such an ill-conceived marriage between two such dissimilar journals would produce a flabby hybrid and thus destroy the only effective mainstream political voice of the left.

Andy Thomas, Nuffield College, Oxford

Just a short note of encouragement to congratulate you all at the *NS* for the issue of 18 March. It was consistently radical, entertaining, informative and forward-looking, a combination which periodicals of the left have found well nigh impossible to achieve over the past decade. Pimlott, Lloyd, Jenkins and Cockburn write well — and portray a refreshing optimism and impatience.

Let's just hope you can keep it up. Good luck with the "merger".

Nae drawers

Elizabeth Harrison, Stirlingshire

We pay vast sums to enable the royal family to live at the level to which they are accustomed to impress the foreigners, or so we are told. Besides they receive expenses, not welfare money.

So why don't we also put the poor among us on the Civil List and speak no more of benefits. And if we paid them the same proportion of national income as more civilised countries do, it should impress the foreigners even more. I doubt if they are much deceived by our class system adherence to "a fur coat and nae drawers".

Harry Barker, Johannesburg, South Africa

Born in Britain nearly 81 years ago and raised there in desperate poverty in an orphanage, I am no believer in the British Establishment and no monarchist. Yet your cartoon of the woman who was fated by birth to be the present Queen of England and who within the limits of the possible has done her job with dignity and efficiency, disgusted me. It is crude, ugly-hearted and a bloody disgrace to a paper purporting to criticise life in a civilised manner.

It does not make change to a more rational system more easy or more likely. By introducing emotion of the sort it arouses it diminishes your influence among your friends and inflames the hearts of your opponents. Nevertheless — Yours still loyally. . .

Neil Lancastle, Cambridge

The left should embrace the royal family and make them truly accountable to the general public as servants and ambassadors of the state, although constitutionally we could extract them from the establishment. If, for example, the royal family were funded by an optional deduction from our pay packets a pivotal principle of socialism would be thrown into the public arena: wealth is a privilege, not a right, and collectively we have the power to take it away.

An accountable royal family would underline the message that wealthy people are only wealthy thanks to the sweat off our backs, and might shape a political consciousness that can consider how to make the big boys of industry more accountable for the money they pay themselves.

Towards a Bill of Rights

Ann Beedell, London NW5

I very much enjoyed Tom Nairn's article (*NS* 11 March) although admit to not always quite following some of the intricacies of his argument. Perhaps I shall have to read his book to find out exactly how Mrs Thatcher, for example, fits into it all.

In his determination to debunk Bagehot he runs the risk of elevating Bagehot's fraudulent myth into a plausible one, which is, that it is still the "secret" power of the monarchy which blocks the path to popular sovereignty. I really do find it hard to believe that in today's political reality the monarchy has quite so much clout as Nairn would have us believe which in a curious way is part of the problem. I would suggest that the relatively recent popularity of the monarchy has taken everyone by surprise, including the "establishment", which while it has certainly used the monarchy as a smokescreen for its otherwise naked ambitions, understands the phenomenon as little as the rest of us. My own guess is that the "Royal Family" has, in fact, been hijacked by the "governed" classes to serve a very ancient and now endemic cultural and emotional deprivation, a deprivation produced by the very class system that the monarch is actually supposed to represent, and which I believe represents a more likely block to popular sovereignty than the monarchy itself. It is a situation which is, to say the least, unhealthy and certainly rather dangerous, since it camouflages at least two things — firstly, the cultural and emotional emptiness of much of British, and particularly English life, and secondly, the actual impotence of the monarchy in relation to the state executive. The popular idea that a safeguarding, politically neutral royal prerogative could or would somehow operate against a hypothetical rogue-elephant executive is the political myth (among many) that perhaps induces most complacency, and, in the absence of any absolute and legally defined limitation of executive power, leaves us most exposed to disaster.

But can we really afford to wait until the republic arrives? If significantly large numbers of British people are not yet emotionally or culturally secure enough to forgo this particular devotion to monarchy, it is perhaps no fault of theirs, but until

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such time as they become so, a Bill of Rights or some other device ought to be inserted into the equation in order to plug up what may one day be recognized as having been the fatal breach in the already very leaky vessel of British democracy.

James Page, London W13
The achievement of Walter Bagehot lies in the fact that he grasped the fundamental formula which enables a state to remain both free and stable, albeit, he expressed his theories in somewhat simplistic language. It was only a century later that the development of psychology and anthropology enabled the great French political theorist, Bertrand de Jouvenel, to explain this formula in depth in his seminal work, *Sovereignty*.

De Jouvenel develops Bagehot's "efficient" and "dignified" factors into the formula of "Dux" (initiating factor) and "Rex" (stabilising factor). The existence of both is essential to a healthy democratic state and their combination and correct balance is to be found only in constitutional monarchy.

The republican form of government is defective since it lacks the kingly (rex) factor which enables social change to be incorporated into the framework of society without upheaval. This accounts for the poor performance of most republics. Many, as in South America, sway between revolution and dictatorship.

Having found a formula which enables the state to cope with the many stresses and strains of corporate life, it is hardly logical to advocate abandoning it for a formula which is full of hazard.

G.M. Barrett, Lymington, Hants
During the 35 years in which I have been your regular reader I often wondered at the occasional eruptions of republican fervour. The latest exposé by Tom Nairn in the issue of 11 March seems to beg the whole question. Surely, what a true socialist would see as the essential needs of modern Britain are a written Constitution, a Bill of Rights and some form of proportional representation. If these fundamentals existed we could really fashion a socialist Britain and the type of description of the personage who fulfilled the function of the Figurehead of State could be largely immaterial.

But I do ask the believers in republicanism to imagine what would happen here if a Republic was declared and after the fervour had died down. Presumably someone would have to be elected President and who would be more likely to run for office, and get elected in the present state of mind of the country's voters, than some aging politician like Mrs Thatcher. Should the electorate at a subsequent General Election elect a Labour majority the incoming Prime Minister would have to push through his or her reforms in the teeth of an ultra-Conservative President who would assuredly have more political punch than the present Monarch.

We British have an aptitude for trying to repeat other countries' mistakes instead of learning from them. Do we really want something like the French Fifth Republic with a President like De Gaulle? Their Constitution is like a joke with socialist President Mitterrand and conservative Premier Chirac both having to attend important meetings according to the rules of that delightful Gallic expression "co-habitation". I have read that in some Presidential elections in the USA only half the electors bother to vote and the winner may scrape home with a bare majority so only a quarter will have actually voted for him and over a half may hate his guts. There a Republican President can veto welfare legislation passed by a Democrat Congress. Do we want that sort of Republic? Furthermore the cost of the Civil List in Britain is only a fraction of the huge sum which the citizens of the USA have to fork out to maintain the Presidency and its appendages. If we look around Europe the only countries which have a high standard of living in a welfare state are the three Scandinavian monarchies. So I say to myself "Heaven preserve us from the likes of President Reagan or President Thatcher and God save the Queen"!

Kathy McHalla, Brighton
Why does Tom Nairn fail to spell it out. British national identity is a "fragile" construction which has to be continually protected by the real and imagined use of force. Consider the ways in which the symbols of British Imperial strength and power

Doonesbury
BY
G. B. TRUDEAU
READY?
READY!
"ENTER: HIT SONG."
TAP! TAP! TAP!
GOT THE PHONE MODEM HOOKED UP, JIM? AND THE INTERFACE CABLE?
YUP. SEND 'ER ON. I'LL TALK TO YOU IN A MINUTE.
WHO'S THAT, JIMMY?
IT'S STEVE. HE'S PHONING IN THE TRACKS FOR A NEW SONG HE WROTE THIS MORNING.
HE'S PHONING IT IN?
INTO MY COMPUTER. THE TUNE IS BROKEN DOWN INTO DIGITAL INFORMATION. I CAN REVIEW AND EDIT IT, NOTE BY NOTE, INSTRUMENT BY INSTRUMENT, USING A SEQUENCE EDITOR TO PUT IT IN PERFECT TIME!
HERE IT COMES... OH, WOW...
3-27
NICE... NICE... OH, WOW, HE'S COOKIN'!
LIKE IT?
VERY CATCHY! I CAN'T GET IT OUT OF MY HEAD!
GBTrudeau

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were mobilised at the time of the Falklands episode? (And what is Clause 28 if not an attempt to deny homosexuals access to equality or identity?)

The legitimation of the use of this force is most clearly expressed in Northern Ireland where the process of establishing an integrated and autonomous national identity is throttled by myths and symbols that perpetuate "British" national identity as a dominant identity and therefore "superior" to any other.

A.G. Wigley, Truro, Cornwall

Tom Nairn's piece is both perceptive and timely. However, his early definition of "the establishment" — from which his piece flows — is only part of the story and historically inaccurate by at least a decade.

May I recommend to Mr Nairn and other interested readers a book entitled *The Establishment* (published by Anthony Blond in 1959) which is described as a symposium and edited by Hugh Thomas. The distinguished contributors are John Vaizey, Simon Raven, Thomas Balogh, Victor Sandelson, Christopher Hollis and Henry Fairlie. The last named is still as far as I know the originator of the phrase "The Establishment" and first used it in the the 1950s. The book itself is still a valid and comprehensive definition of what "the establishment" really is, even nearly 30 years on, and demonstrates once again that nothing is new and nothing changes.

William Brister, Louvain, Belgium

Nairn and Lloyd do not define what they mean by democracy. They seem to equate democracy with the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. Do they propose filling that gap with other (democratic) institutions? To me they do not take an uncritical stance on democracy. They take account of some of democracy's obvious failings or democratic government as it has been practised up to now based on the principle of universal suffrage. Hitler came to power through the democratic process; Thatcher and Reagan were both democratically elected. Lastly, the connection between abolition of the monarchy and the automatic arrival of democracy as if by magic is not altogether clear. Are the republics of France, West Germany, the United States and the Soviet Union for instance, more democratic than Britain? Let us have a look at some of the shortcomings of "democracy".

People are not necessarily altruistic; nor do they necessarily have a moral or social sense. They may want a government whose policies coincide with their own self-centred self-interests. As Marx would say, political control without economic control is an irrelevance. Political democracy without economic democracy makes no difference. Democracy or democratic principles may lead to the tyranny of the majority over the minority. The *NS*, as a spokesman for the poor, blacks, women, gays and other minorities, should be aware of this danger. Other examples of failures of this type are Ulster, the Lebanon, Israel.

Nairn is right to point out that without the monarchy the country would be at risk of disintegration and fragmentation through policies like those pursued by Thatcher. Those on the left might rub their hands in glee at this prospect but who would be served by instability, disorder, lawlessness and anarchy? Who reigns in West Belfast or Beirut? The people with money, the people with guns and the people with the biggest private army.

Why not extend and modify the nature and role of the House of Lords to act as a safeguard and check on the worst excesses of democracy? The advantage of having a non-elected body is that the changing moods of a fickle electorate do not have to be pandered to. Decisions could be taken on their merits, not in the context of fear of not being re-elected. The brief of the new, revised House of Lords would be to protect and speak up for the national interest — as opposed to the sectional or sectarian interests of one political party or other — to safeguard the rights of minorities where they may be threatened, and to take a long-term view of social and economic policy. The House of Lords could be de-politicised: the separation of peers into party groups could be abolished. (Hereditary peerages could also be abolished.) Experts could be drawn, as now, from all walks of life and to keep the democratic balance, the Lords could have powers similar to those it has now: to amend and delay but not veto legislation. Envisaged thus, party-political, or spiteful legislation like the abolition of the GLC could be blocked.

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CHAIR: Councillor JOSIE BYRNE

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Weekend competition

No 3019 **Set by Ms de Meaner**

You might think that nothing could stop me in my tracks and, by and large, you'd be right. But the other day my eyes got snagged by a book lying round in the Literary Department, unhooked themselves, then got caught again. I've no reason to suppose that the tome is anything but erudite, scholarly, considered, etc; the title, however, was to say the least surprising: *Hitler's Defeat in Austria* (by Gottfried-Karl Kinderman, pub. Hurst). Could we have equally astonishing book titles: max. ten per entrant by 13 April?

No 3016 **Set by Russell Lucas**

Palindromic haikus on any subject whatsoever.

Report **By Rosie Hughes**

Oh dear, oh dear, D.A. Prince. Didn't your sweet mother ever let you know that pride comes before a fall? Far from being compelled to accept your creased and hand-written poem ("you'll need every entry you can get for this competition"), we've been inundated by palindromic haikus — several of them better than yours. In fact, had we specified the subject matter (quantum physics as a metaphor for moonlight?) you darlings would still have come up trumps. *Some* of the entries, I admit, were cheats: merely having haikus whose *words* read both ways was not the point of the exercise; nor, Noel Petty, was it quite playing cricket to write your haiku in Ish. To the authors below, however, twelve pounds — and a cuddle for being so clever (though I can't help wondering what poor, dear Dr Owen has gone and done now).

Lady Macbeth, Attempting to Wash away an Imaginary Bloodstain, Describes the Devastating Effects of Sleeplessness and Dismisses her Husband as Worse than a Crazy, Claustrophobic Beast

Flow, damned spot! Came no
sleep — pupil's slip-up peels one.
Mac tops den-mad wolf.

CADENCE BRAKING

Sitting in his bath, the poet discovers that careless pleasure has its price

Sex at Naomi's
tops tops! But I . . . I tub-spot
spots. I moan, "Taxes!"

GEORGE SIMMERS

No omen of fire,
no sign — in Roma morning
is one riff, one moon.

GERARD BENSON

Late petal sees a
rare sun; O bonus era!
Ra sees late petal.

Re Dr Owen:
an Alp test? Ararat set?
Plan a new order.

FRANK MCDONALD

Recipe for something or other

Tuna tops level
potato or root. Atop
level, spot a nut.

KATIE MALLETT

Silence During the Siesta Please

Pan, nap now on sward.
Noon, too hot pop to hoot, noon
Draws now on. Pan, nap!

GEORGE MOOR

Seven eves we sleep.
Women in Level Nine mow,
Peel, sew; seven eves.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Salamanca 132

"Shot by mistake, 2D"

PRIZES: Copies of the *Collins Concise Dictionary* for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Salamanca 132, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ, by first post 3 May.

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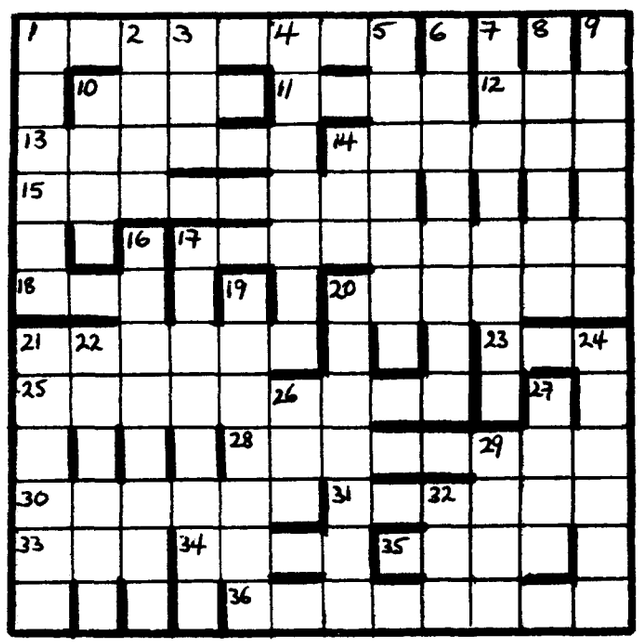

Name_____

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ACROSS

1. Now we see the danger in alcohol (3,5)
10. Attempt to carry ultimate in China-ware – on this? (4)
11. The old, before packing in, move unsteadily (4)
12. Born to produce throwback? (3)
13. Young bird isn't e.g. flying (6)
14. It's fresh and bracing always in cathedral city (3,3)
15. Speech-sound making men hop, eh? (4,4)
17. Workman to be sorry about large jumper (6,3)
18. Big bird wheeling to give harsh cry (3)
20. Sleepy? Use elm concoction (4,2)
21. Could be eery to one who's inexperienced (3,3)
23. Double back: take in curve (3)
25. Could be a car propelled with commotion (5,4)
28. Sticks one before while in short wedge (4,4)
30. Shakespeare's descendants write plays with words about lives being over (3,3)
31. Maudling, say, socialist, to turn to the right (3,3)
33. Produce little ones with no binding ties (3)
34. Right old paramour having no heart (4)
35. Man's carrying round pipe (4)
36. Stretches of England river opening in towns seen about (3,5)

DOWN

1. Kept by Egyptian juggler, a fool, with little image (3,3)
2. *See title* (4)
3. Small bird, English, fleet winged? (3)
4. Distant part in railway siding appearing in a casual manner (4,3)
5. Flying post: top note and nothing more, going up? (3,4)
6. Fuehrer roaming, see, in big film? (3,5)
7. Kelly, say, taken in by nymph, no longer marvellous (3,5)
8. Old Sarum undergoing renovation, terrible (3,3)
9. Fairy under shelter that's covered in foliage (3,3)
10. Laugh at tree man (2,2)
14. Old seat with square wing (3)
16. Visibly damaging drink with zest to it (4,4)
17. Sing like a bird, exhausted with nonsense (4,4)
19. Boy with gun metal that's bent (3,4)
20. Lead once hung on bird (3,4)
21. "Rubbishy" shot at old bird (3,3)
22. Purposes anyone says commonly (3,3)
24. Fold-mark seeker's made (6)
26. On this side of Rome one's surrounded by bodyguards (3)
27. Fix the value of old copper coin with letter on (2,2)
29. (An advantage) on the other hand, one getting information (4)
32. Money, copper, old, English (3)

Solution to Salamanca 131

The snatches from *Pinafore's Captain*: "(Fair moon, to) thee I sing, (Bright regent of the heavens,) Say, why is everything Either at sixes or (at) sevens?"

Prizewinners to Salamanca 131

Mrs Veronica Foley (Ickenham, Middx)
Jill Wilkie (Richmond, Surrey)
Roger Hallam (London N13)

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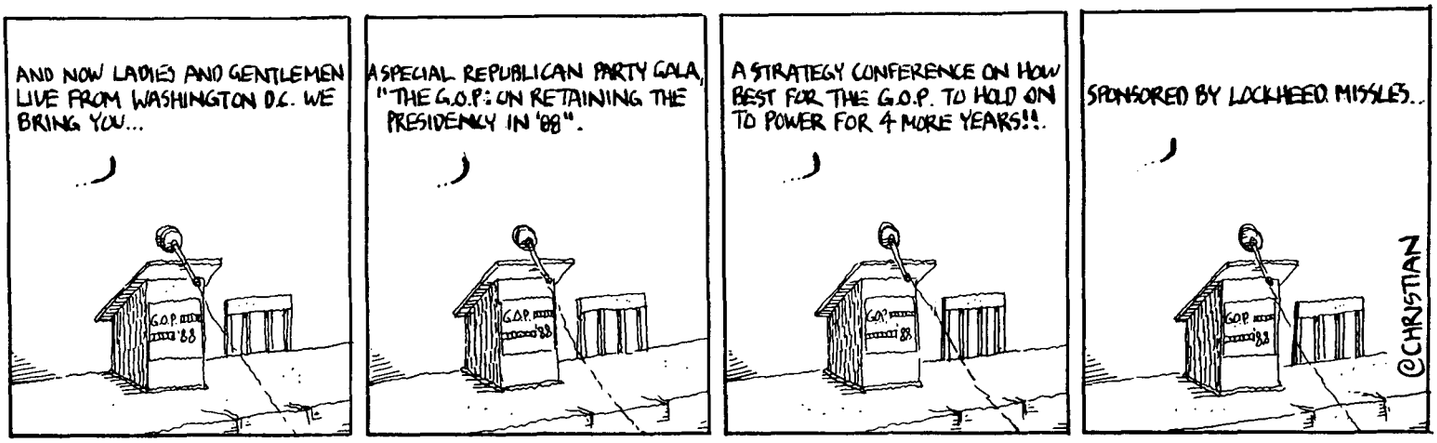
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Chess

THE EUWE Memorial Tournament in Amsterdam last month (a double-rounder for just 4 players) was a new landmark in Nigel Short's career: 1. Short 4, 2-3. Karpov and Ljubojevic 3½, 4. Timman 1. He finished ahead of Karpov — ahead of the greatest tournament player in the history of chess! Still, does this prove anything much? In such an exclusive event for the *crème de la crème* the blood-letting is held within decent bounds. The only safe conclusion is that anyone singled out as a victim must have been off form.

That seems to have been the case with Timman in Amsterdam. In *diagram A*, from a French Winawer, there is an apparent balance of power — both Kings are stuck in the centre, both f7 and c2 are weak points. Yet Timman lost almost at once to a rather obvious combination by Short: **18. Qg7 Nf5** White was threatening Nh7 (-f6+). For the moment Black need not fear 19. Bxf5 exf5 20. e6?? because of 20 . . . Neg3+! and c2 falls first. **19. Qf6 a5?** This allows White to decide the game by blocking the c-file. He had to keep his line of fire open with 19 . . . Nb6, although Black's prospects are inferior after 20. g4, since the attempt to trap White's Q with 20 . . . Ba4 21. Rxa4 Nd7 fails to 22. Nxe6. **20. Rxc4! dxc4 21. Bxf5 Qd8** If 21 . . . exf5 22. e6 fxe6 the quickest kill is 23. Qg6+ Kd8 24. Nxe6+ Bxe6 25. Bg5+. **22. Qg7 Qe7 23. Ne4 exf5 24. Nd6+ Kd8 25. Bg5 f6 26. Nb7+ 1-0.**

This finish reminded me of another game in which Black's weakness on f7 in the French Winawer was exploited. . . by Jam Timman! From *diagram B* **Timman-Vaganian, Montpellier Candidates 1985** surged on: **18. Rxf7! Kxf7 19. Qh5+ Ke7 20. Bxf5 Rcf8** Here too recapturing on f5 loses: 20 . . . exf5 21. Qh7+ Ke6 22. Qh6+ Kd7 23. Qd6+ Ke8 24. Qe6+ etc. **21. Qh4+ Ke8 22. Qh6!** 22. Bxe6 Rxg2 is not nearly so convincing. **Qc7 23. Qxe6+ Kd8 24. Bh3 d4 25. 0-0** Black's cause is evidently lost by now, but Vaganian's resourceful wriggling enlivens the finale. **d3! 26. cxd3 Qb6+ 27. Rf2 Kc7 28. Qc4 Rh8 29. d4 Qb1 30. d5! Qxc1+ 31. Rf1 Qe3+ 32. Kh1 Kb8 33. dxc6 Kc7 34. Qb4 1-0.**

But Short didn't just win the tournament by default. He played marvellously, and everyone who likes a King-hunt will enjoy the way he beat Ljubo. From *diagram C*: **21. Bxg7! Kxg7 22. Nh5+ Kg6** It's an interesting exercise to work out how White wins against the other 4 legal moves with the Black King. **23. e5+! Kxh5 24. Qf4** Twin threats of Qg4 mate and Qxf7 drive the BK on to his doom. **Bxg5 25. Qxf7+ Kh4 26. Qh7+ Kg3 27. Qh5 Kh2 28. Qxg5 Rg8 29. Rd2+ Bg2 30. Qf4+ Rg3 31. Be4 Qxe4 32. Qxe4 1-0.**

I must end with a footnote to a position discussed last week [3r4/4k2p/1pnr1pp1/p1pn4/8/6P1/PP2PPBP/1R R1BK2]. This was from Psakhis-Speelman, a game which won the brilliancy prize at the Hastings tournament. Jon tells me that unfortunately his knight-hopping seems, in the last analysis, to be unsound. Still the refutation makes a fine and witty point itself. After: **20 . . . Ndb4 21. a3 Na2!? 22. Rc4 Nd4** White *should* play 23 Ra1 (instead of Psakhis' 23. b3) **Nb3 24. Rxa2 Rd1 25. Re4+ Kf7 26. f4 Rb1** I had looked at this position and thought Black was doing well because he threatens both . . . Rdd1 and . . . Nc1. But Jon pointed out that White has: **27. Re3! Nc1 28. Be4!** and Black's Rook is just as inescapably trapped as White's!

A shame to see such a beauty flawed? Not at all, thought Jon, just one of those things that happens in the heat of battle. I have always felt that chess was essentially like logic and mathematical proof, a sort of business in which human beings are only incidentally involved. But Speelman sees it as just a game between a couple of dumb apes.

Diagram A:
Short-Timman, Euwe Memorial 1988

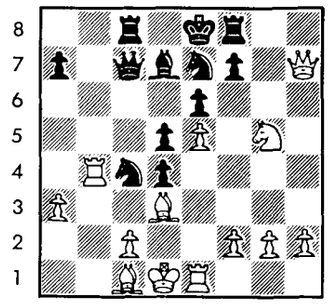


Diagram B:
Timman-Vaganian

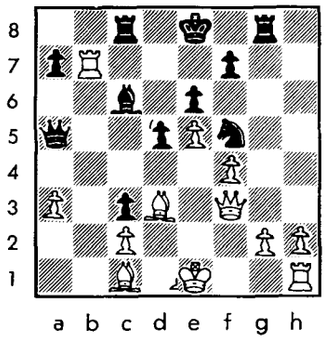
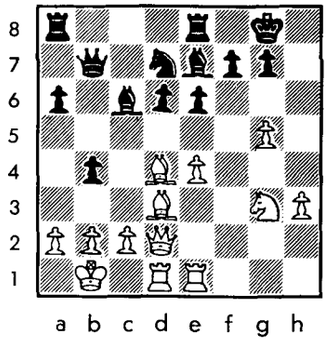


Diagram C:
Short-Ljubojevic Euwe Memorial 1988



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☐ She used to come down on the 4th July to Eton in a huge Daimler, with strawberries and cream — that was during the war, remember, when most people came by train and ate sandwiches. — *The Times* (E. Wade)

☐ The last word in Do-It-Yourself — a self-assembly coffin — is being sold by shop-keeper Mr Steve Nicholson of Gainsborough. He suggests they can be used as cocktail cabinets until they are needed. — *Sunday Telegraph* (David Ealey)

☐ Five hundred Anglicans made an act of repentance at a mass meeting in London after it had been claimed that demonic influences were at work in the General Synod. Earlier the meeting had heard a violent "prophecy" during which the speaker tore his clerical stock and collar in two in symbolic demonstration of how, he said, the Lord would rend the Church of England for allegedly misusing its position and failing to proclaim God's word faithfully. — *Church Times* (Cynthia Hall)

☐ Mr Baker, who ruled out any return to capital punishment as a solution, told the Conservative Central Council meeting in Buxton that the committee would consider what action can be taken by central government, local authorities, voluntary bodies, school governors, head teachers and teachers and parents to secure the orderly atmosphere necessary in schools for effective teaching and learning. — *Guardian* (Howard Peach)

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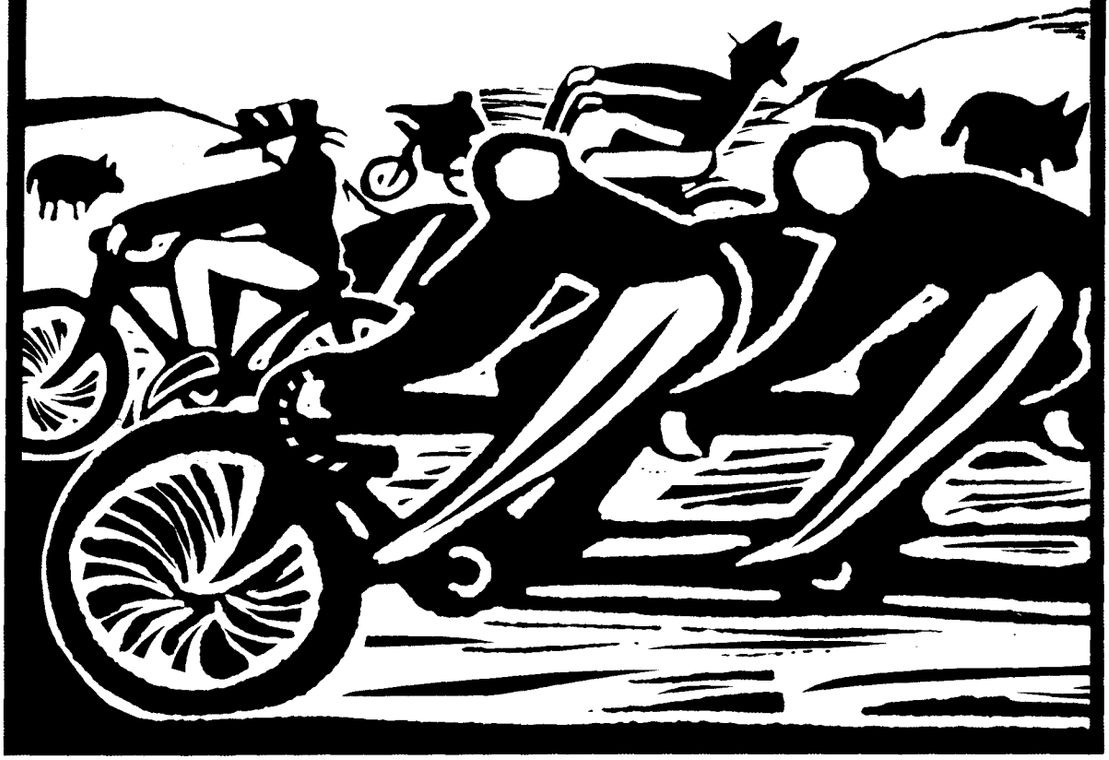

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